

I Don't Want to be Involved

By Don C. Truex

In theory, none would deny the importance of the local body of believers. Our participation, however, sometimes belies the true sentiment of our hearts. Much of this discrepancy would be alleviated if we were to truly come to understand the concept of "membership" in the body. Listen to Paul: "For as we have many members in one body, but all members do not have the same function, we being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another," **(Romans 12:4,5)**. Membership in a local church implies much more than simply having one's name and picture in a directory. It acknowledges that we are willing to fulfill the "one another" obligations that are essential to the relationship, i.e. "love," "serve," "bear with," "admonish," "forgive," etc.

What can we do to be better involved in the local church? Let me suggest several things.

First, realize your dependence. No Christian can function effectively by himself. Just as a hand severed from an arm ceases to function and will inevitably die, so also a Christian who does not participate with the others members of the body is destined to decay and die spiritually. Sometimes you hear a brother say, "I don't need the local church. I can function just fine by myself." Really? Then you're saying you know

more about spiritual health than the apostle Paul. He taught that one member can never say to another, "I don't need you!" **(1 Corinthians 15:21)**.

Second emphasize equality. No member of a local body of believers should feel smug or superior to any other, **(Romans 12:3)**. God designed both the physical and spiritual body so that all the members are important. The applications of this principle are legion. Member of our physical body are quick to aid any injured member, they do not ambitiously draw attention to themselves in order to protect a weaker member of the body. So also in the local church, when we learn to "bear one's another's burdens" to "bear the infirmities of the weak" -- when we do that, the body as a whole is strengthened.

Third, work for unity. God designed the human body to love harmony and hate discord. In fact, when there is discord in the human body we say that it has a "disease." The principle holds true spiritually as well. That's why Paul encourages us to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, **(Ephesians 4:3)**.

Now, how healthy would the body be if every member functions just like you?



(Romans 8:31-32) - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Sick

Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey)	Lori Holloway	Chick Wade
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Ruby Johnson (Erica Seymore's Grandmother)	Jared Nixon
Ross Folmar	Dave and Betty Bradford	Johnny Adrian (Friend of Sullivan's)
Ed Mort (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	"Grandmama" Odessa Wyatt (Dyle's grandmother)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)
Gerald White (Christopher's and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	Joe Perry (Anna Miller's Relative)

News and Notes

- ☒ Let's remember our expectant mothers: Laura Weldon, Anna Miller, Nicole Pender, Joy Liu and Amanda Stephens.
- ☒ There will be a meeting this week (July 18-23) with Mark White at the Southeast church in Montgomery. Godly Living In An Ungodly World—Lessons From the Book of Daniel Monday – Friday 7PM
- ☒ We are please to have Steven and Melanie Smith, Drew Hailey, Andrew, Lottie Kate - 807 Socopatoy Court, Auburn 36830, Phone 501-1533.

July Birthdays

- July 14 - Jack Pressnell
- July 15 - Bradley Seymore
- July 16 - Nathan Smith
- July 24 - Brittany Holley
- July 25 - Yvette Rouse

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The Auburn Beacon



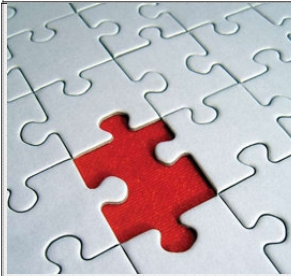
Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

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Where Do Elders Come From?

By Paul Earnhart



Thought to Ponder

The acid test of a father's leadership is not in the realm of his social skills, his public relations, his managerial abilities at the office, or how well he handles himself before the public. It is in the home.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

The scarcity of functioning elders (bishops, pastors) in local churches has led some Christians to conclude that they are a rare breed with rare qualities. Otherwise, they reason, why would they be so difficult to come by? Contrary to this rather discouraging view, elders do not have to be imported from outer space. They are generated from ordinary human beings from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation," and perhaps it will help identify the reason for their scarcity if we trace, step by step, where elders originate.

First of all, and elementally, elders come from strong Christians, men and women who by the power of God have been radically reborn **(John 3:3-6)**. Now, here are some remarkable people. They have given up everything for the Lord's sake, claiming not even their breath as their own **(1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 2:1-2)**. Theirs is a life of utter trust in the Son of God **(Galatians 2:20)**. Why should we be surprised that something special should arise in

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the characters of folk like this? They will love God supremely and care about others in a self-sacrificial way.

Secondly, elders (Greek presbuteroi, older men), by definition, originate from Christians who are men. There is nothing special or remarkable or difficult here. From the outset, men as well as women have been touched by the appeal of the gospel **(Acts 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 8:12; 17:12,34)** and we can logically anticipate that wherever the gospel is preached, this will continue to be so.

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Thirdly, elders are to be taken from among Christian men who are mature in years (older) and in the faith ("not a novice," **1 Timothy 3:6**). The bulk of the bishop's required qualities are no more than would be expected in any mature disciple: "... sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality ... no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money ... good testimony from them that are without ... " (**1 Timothy 3:7**) "... not selfwilled, not soon angry ... a lover of good ... just, holy, self-controlled; holding to the faithful word ... " (**Titus 1:6-9**). Every Christian, without exception, is expected to grow and mature into "a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ . . ." (**Ephesians 4:13**). There is nothing unusual about the Lord's servants becoming increasingly like Him. It is their failure to grow up that is considered aberrant (**1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14**).

Fourthly, elders are drawn from mature Christian men who are married. The Holy Spirit has indicated that the elder is to be "the husband of one wife" (**1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6**). Here, again, there is no special obstacle. As a matter of course, most men marry.

Fifthly, elders are to be taken from mature Christian men who are married and have children. His children are to be believers and those still in his household are to be respectfully obedient (**Titus 1:6; 1 Timothy 3:4**). There is nothing remarkable about a married man having children. Most married men are fathers, and from such a characteristic population new disciples were drawn in the past and will be drawn today. Nor should it be thought unusual for a Christian father's children to be faithful disciples and obedient to him. Godly parents will, more often than not, lead their children to serve the Lord

(**Proverbs 22:6**). In New Testament times, it was not uncommon for whole households to be converted (**Acts 10:24; 11:14; 16:31,33**).

From among mature Christian family men with many different abilities there are bound to be some who are effective teachers (**1 Timothy 3:2**), able to nurture and train their brethren in the righteous ways of the Savior and protect them from the deceptions of false teachers (**Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-5**).

Now, from all these qualifications of elders there is nothing so significant as the fact that they are devoted Christians. That they are men, married men, family men is not anything special. That they possess native skills as teachers gives them no distinction, either. Many men who have no faith in Christ at all could say the same. In the case of elders, it is the unqualified devotion that these men have to Christ that gives meaning to their family relationships and to their God-given skills.

I cannot tell you how often I have heard complaints about the absence of elders in local churches and the difficulty of finding qualified men to serve. It is not helpful merely to describe the problem and complain about it. We need to find the exact source of this critical shortage and formulate some godly solutions.

One thing we must face is that the Holy Spirit makes elders out of devoted Christians and churches that are filled with half-hearted and indifferent disciples don't have any material to work with. The answer to the shortage of every kind of worker in the kingdom of God is to get each child of God among us to be totally committed. If we can do that, the problem will take care of itself in time. If not, we will keep on complaining about the shortage of elders today and assure an even greater shortage tomorrow. Until we are willing to deal with our own shortfall in devotion, it is a little unrealistic to complain about the other fellow's.



The Simple Truth About Unity

By Jere E. Frost

The simple truth is that the Bible, God's word, and the Bible alone, contains the answer to our problems about fellowship, unity and division. It is the divine key to unity. We do not need smarter men or a new-fangled, higher hermeneutic; we need men with greater faith and an old-fashioned, deeper trust.

The Simplicity of Unity

We unhesitatingly and confidently affirm that the unity of the faith is a unity of agreement as to the truth. That means the truth can and should be understood (**Eph. 5:17**), and understood alike (different understandings equate to some *misunderstandings*). Unity is *in* Christ. This means no organization, plan or doctrine that is not of Christ, that is not in his gospel, can be set forth as any part of the ground common to believers.

Confusing the Issue

Discordant sounds are expected from sectarian sources, but it is distressing and alarming when they are heard from erstwhile gospel preachers. Two ideas are now frequently emphasized, and in both there is a germ of truth, but both are deliberately promoted at the expense of pure and simple gospel precepts for unity.

(1) *It is said that each local church determines who it will fellowship.* This quite properly means that no alliance of preachers, school or paper can make brotherhood determinations or issue a creedal basis for fellowship. This is true. But the implication is that certain doctrines do not constitute the divine standard by which an individual or church is to make its determinations.

For example, when a specific subject comes up, and one aborts a Bible discussion by saying, "Each church makes its own decision," it implies that each church is at liberty to decide as it pleases. That's like

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interrupting a discussion on baptism by saying, "Each person must decide for himself." That is true. But it is also true that no church or individual has the right to decide *anything* contrary to Scripture. If they do, though no other church or individual has the right to usurp their autonomy, they are still wrong! So the *need* of the hour is to study, believe, practice, preach and proclaim what Scripture says! The fact that we all decide for ourselves does not change the standard for fellowship, and

should never abort a Bible discussion.

(2) *"Romans 14 describes differences that should be allowed. We must tolerate different interpretations or we will wind up meeting in a bunch of telephone booths."* This is the voice of ignorance about Romans 14 coupled with the absence of conviction about divine truth.

Instead of emphasizing that fellowship and unity are based upon gospel truth, and urging fervent studies and brotherly discussions, these two ideas are being promoted to the stifling of study and to the justifying of gross departures from the faith.

Both of them, as is the case with most error, contain a germ of truth, but then completely mislead the hearer. It's like saying everybody makes mistakes, and then finishing by saying we should not worry about repentance. The fact of mistakes, differences of understanding about something, and the fact that each church determines its own fellowship as opposed to some hierarchy doing it, does not change one simple fact -- fellowship is in the light, and to claim it in darkness is to lie (**1 John 1:6-7**), and unity with men without fellowship with God is worthless.

Conclusion

We must go back to the *divine* formula. It will work. It really will.

