

Preacher's Pen points

Selecting Elders & Deacons



As we contemplate the appointment of elders and deacons among us it is useful to revisit the texts that speak about how the early church handled this important task. I have noted that there is one common theme running through all the appointments recorded in the book of Acts—prayer!

It is important in the selection of elders and deacons to study carefully the qualifications for these roles of service, and to do so with openness to the kind of person that God would have us select to both lead and serve the congregation. And, it is important to encourage men to evaluate themselves and to enter the work of the Lord willingly and conscientiously. But one thing that is often overlooked is the need for dependence upon God to reveal providentially those to whom He would entrust His flock.

Prayer in Selecting an Apostle

When the apostles were seeking a replacement for Judas as a witness of the Lord's life and resurrection they found two men qualified to serve; but before appointing either of them, knowing that they should select only one, they bowed together before the Lord seeking His choice: "*And they prayed, and said, 'Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen...'*" (Ac. 1:24).

Prayer in Selecting Servants

Later when servants were needed to serve in meeting the needs of the widows in the Jerusalem congregation, the church was asked to bring to the apostles those who they considered qualified. Interestingly Luke tells us, "*after praying, they laid their hands upon them*" (Ac. 6:6).

Prayer in Selecting Elders

After Paul and Barnabas had established congregations among the Galatians they returned to those congregations in order to encourage them to remain true to the Lord and to appoint elders in every church. But again we see earnest dependence upon the Lord in the selection process: "*And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed*" (Ac. 14:23).

Making Our Selection with Prayer

All of us could profit by remembering the sobering consequences of selecting leaders. Such choices determine whether God's people will be adequately shepherded (whether provisions will be made for their spiritual needs) and whether the work of God will have the needed oversight (whether it will be superintended with good stewardship). Surely such awesome goals require dependence upon God for those who choose and for those who might be chosen.

I urge you then, above all else, in your thoughts and decisions about the selection of elders and deacons for this congregation, to pray—to pray at length, even with fasting if need be. And if you are selected to serve this congregation, I urge you to pray fervently about your acceptance or rejection of the church's call to service.

Surely choices made in such a spiritual environment will not only help us make the best choices; it will also assure us of God's help in selecting those who will bring His blessing to our congregation. Pray about it!

—Johnny Felker (www.truthchasers.com)