“The City of God: The Heart of Leadership”

**Acts 20:27-32; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4**

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Earl Pleger, Hayden Bible Church, 9/26/21)

We all do things based on what we believe in our hearts. That’s also true of the church. God’s word is the source of what we do when we internalize His word in our hearts. Today we will explore the role of elders and deacons and how they contribute to a healthy church. And just as importantly, we will explore the plan for **our** relationship with our elders and deacons.

Elders are needed for consistent order and maintenance of the spiritual health of the church. Having multiple elders is Biblical, and it provides accountability. They can share the workload and they can share wisdom. Having multiple elders allows for more encouragement. Elders are to rightly divide the word of truth (teach), and guide in matters of doctrine and practice. The elders at Hayden Bible Church believe in unity in their decision-making. If they are not united on a new direction, they stay put. And dear flock, remember that elders are human. Pastor Earl said, “We don’t get everything right, but we strive to. Our agenda is the Gospel, not our personal agendas.”

There is a need for order, organization, and governance in the church. Elders are to lead by example. They are to be faithful stewards of that which they have been entrusted. Elders are to be male believers, and are called to accurately teach and defend the scriptures. How do we choose elders? We look to see if a man is already practicing the traits of an elder. Then we keep watching until the time is right. (Q1)

Paul wrote about deacons to Timothy in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 because the church at Ephesus was struggling with false teachers. The elders needed some support! Deacons are assistants to elders, but not their servants. Deacons are servants, but not all who serve are deacons. Some may maintain the church grounds or serve tables or flip pancakes. All deacons will maintain and encourage healthy relationships within the church body. When the elders needed help in Acts 6:1-5, they appointed deacons. Steven was first on the list, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. The job of the 12 could not have been done without the assistance of the 7. Deacons aren’t called to teach, but they are called to serve, love, and encourage. They promote connections, so that physical needs can be met. Deacons are the servant-leaders of the flock. (Q2)

We are the members of the church. What difference do all these elders and deacons make in our lives? How do we relate to them? Read Heb. 13:17-18. The church is called to submit to its leaders. It doesn’t mean to mindlessly fall in line, but we are to be engaged with them, and stay in relationship with them. The leaders are to be a vital part of our lives. Read Acts 20:27-32. The church is called to expect adversity. Leaders are called to shepherd their members through that adversity. All of the epistles of the New Testament were all about shepherding. We need to watch for the “fierce wolves” of today: departures from the truth, false doctrine, ungodly conduct. We need to be on guard for leaders who stray and lead their flock away from the true gospel. (Q3) Leaders (just like members) are subject to church discipline. Read and compare 1 Tim. 5:19-20 with Matt. 18:15-20.

The church should expect teaching straight from God’s word and without apology. We plainly express the essentials as doctrine; if it is unclear, we say so. The church should know the heart of their leadership. This can only happen through relationship. As we all know, relationships take time and work. Following God’s instructions brings great unity and great hope. Our growth as a body is much like our growth as individuals: this is a marathon, not a sprint!

Paul told the elders in Ephesus, “Imitate me; shepherd the flock.” This is the call for the elders of Hayden Bible Church as well (see Heb. 13:7). Do you know what gives our elders the most joy? It’s when they see their brothers and sisters **living out** the messages they have been taught! **THAT** is the sign of a healthy body of believers!

**QUESTIONS:**

1. These lists of qualifications are quite extensive. Does an elder have to “measure up” to all of these things all of the time? Why or why not?
2. Though scripture describes an official leadership role of deacon, distinct from the general population of the church, what does scripture say regarding serving in general? See Romans 12:4-13, What are some other “one-anothers” of scripture?
3. How can false teachers arise from within the church?! Aren’t these guys Christians?! Explain.

**“Sing of My Redeemer” (Bliss)**

I will sing of my Redeemer,

And His wondrous love to me;

On the cruel cross He suffered,

From the curse to set me free.

(refrain)

Sing, oh, sing of my Redeemer,

With His blood He purchased me,

On the cross He sealed my pardon,

Paid the debt, and made me free.

I will praise my dear Redeemer,

His triumphant pow’r I’ll tell,

How the victory He giveth

Over sin, and death, and hell.

I will sing of my Redeemer,

And His heav’nly love to me;

He from death to life hath brought me,

Son of God with Him to be.