

Thesis: As we appoint elders to shepherd and oversee the Spencer church of Christ, let us remember our responsibilities. Our elders watch over our souls (our spiritual lives) and will give an account to the chief Shepherd. Consequently, we are to obey and submit to them, allowing them to shepherd with joy.

Support: Hebrews 13:17

I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

2. Introduction

- a. One year ago, we embarked on a journey together.
 - i. I stood before you and presented a lesson on church organization.
 1. We learned on that day, that Jesus Christ is one and only head of his body, the church.
 - a. However, Jesus has empowered certain individuals to serve on his behalf.
 - i. **Ephesians 4:11** states, “¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers.”
 1. The inspired apostles and prophets have long passed away, but the evangelists and shepherd-teachers remain yet today.
 2. Each has a vital and distinct role within individual congregations.
 - a. Evangelists preach and teach.
 - b. Shepherd-teachers teach, oversee, and shepherd congregations, including the evangelist.
 1. On that day, our primary text was **I Timothy 3:1-7**. From its study, we learned:
 - i. The roles and the responsibilities of the elders.
 - ii. The biblical qualifications that must be met by each man.
 - iii. The biblical requirement of a plurality of men serving in this capacity.
 1. The Bible knows nothing of female pastors or single preacher-pastors leading congregations.
 - iv. Moreover, brother Don reiterated and expounded on this material in the Sunday morning adult class.
 - ii. Six months later, I followed up with another lesson on elders, this time from **I Peter 5:1-5**.
 1. We learned then that three different Greek words are used to describe the exact same group of men.
 - a. Each word emphasizes a different part of their ministry.



- i. *Presbyteros* (translated as presbyter or elder) literally means “older.”
 - I. The emphasis here is on age, experience, and wisdom.
 - ii. *Episkopos* (translated as bishop or overseer) literally means “looks or watches over.”
 - 1. This word stresses the elders’ oversight and leadership responsibilities.
 - iii. *Poimen* (translated as shepherd or pastor) literally means “one who tends to a flock.”
 - I. The emphasis here is on the spiritual care and feeding of the flock of God.
 - b. All three of these Greek words and, therefore, all six of these English words can and should be used interchangeably.
 - i. They all refer to the same group of men.
 - c. Here’s the bottom line: Elders are older men who oversee and shepherd the flock of God among them.
 - i. Their job is to keep the saved saved.
 - iii. After all of this congregational study and many more hours of personal study, we started the elder selection process on September 20, 2009.
 - 1. Today, some five months later, we bring this process to fruition.
3. **I’d like to invite brother Gary Nieman, brother Russ Draeger, and brother Duane Anderson to sit on the front pew at my left hand.**
 - a. **After the prayerful study of the scriptures, these are the men that you have selected to teach, lead, and shepherd us.**
 - b. **These are the men I will appoint and set aside as our elders as we commend and commit them to God.**
 - c. **But before so doing, I’d like to take a couple of minutes to remind them of their awesome responsibility and remind the church of its responsibility as well.**
 - d. **If you have your Bibles, please turn them to Hebrews 13:17. This will be our main text this morning. The Hebrew writer states:**
 - i. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
4. **This morning I submit two main points for your consideration. One is addressed to the elders, and the other is for the rest of us. First, elders watch over our souls.**
 - a. The Hebrew writer says, “they [our spiritual leaders - elders] are keeping watch over [our] souls, as those who will have to give an account.”
 - i. Shepherds have an awesome and grave responsibility.
 - I. As I said before, their job is to keep the saved saved; they accomplish this by keeping watch over our souls.
 - a. This reminds us of Ezekiel the prophet. He was also commissioned as a watchman.
 - i. **Ezekiel 3:17-21:**

¹⁷ "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ¹⁸ If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹ But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. ²⁰ Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. ²¹ But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul."

1. Like Ezekiel the prophet, elders watch over souls.
2. Watching over souls is serious business. It involves:
 - a. Living like Christ.
 - b. Encouraging the discouraged.
 - c. Warning and retrieving the wayward.
 - d. Educating and edifying all of us.
 - e. Leading Christ's body here in Spencer.
3. To do this effectively, our elders will spend countless hours:
 - a. In Bible study.
 - b. Prayer.
 - c. Visitation.
 - d. Hospitality.
4. As you watch over us with vigilance, you will have some sleepless nights.
2. You will have to give an account of your stewardship of this flock when the chief Shepherd returns.
 - a. But when you succeed, and I know you will, each of you will receive the unfading crown of glory (**I Peter 5:4**).
3. Soul watching is a difficult job, and you will give an account, but the rewards here and now and for all of eternity are well worth the price.
 - b. Elders watch over our souls.
5. **Elders are not the only ones with responsibilities however. The church also has responsibilities. Second, Christians obey and submit.**



- a. The Hebrew writer states, “Obey your leaders and submit to them,.... Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
 - i. Elders have the responsibility to teach; we have the responsibility to be taught.
 - ii. Elders have the responsibility to lead; we have the responsibility to be led.
 - iii. As long as what the elders do and say and demand is biblical, we must obey them and submit to them.
 1. Within the context of elders, the apostle Peter writes in **I Peter 5:5-6**, “⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,”
 - a. As the flock, we are to humble ourselves, obey, submit, and subject ourselves to the rule of our elders, because that is what God would have us do.
 - b. By doing so, we are in effect submitting to God, and eventually we will all be exalted.
 2. Paul adds in **I Thessalonians 5:12-13**, “¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.
 - a. The church must love and respect our elders because of the work they are doing – they are watching over our souls.
 3. We should make every effort to make their job and lives as pleasant and joyful as possible.
 - a. Our hope should be that our elders reiterate the words of the apostle and elder John. He said, “⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (**3 John 4**).
 - iv. The elders lead; we follow.
 - v. The elders teach; we learn.
 - vi. We do these things with humility and with love for our elders. In so doing, they will be filled with joy.
- b. Christians obey and submit.

6. Conclusion

- a. The Hebrew writer makes it clear that elders have an awesome and great responsibility.
 - i. They are keeping watch over our souls.
- b. Therefore, we, as the church, those under their care, must obey them and submit to them, making them as joyful as possible.
- c. Elders have responsibilities towards us, and we likewise have responsibilities towards them.

7. Elder Appointment Ceremony

- a. Brother Gary Nieman, brother Duane Anderson, brother Russ Draeger, please stand.

- i. Brothers, to each of the three of you who have agreed to serve as elders I give you the following biblical charge: That you guard your lives to keep your reputations blameless before the world and your lives exemplary to the church; that you see that the Christians under your oversight receive sound and complete spiritual guidance; and that you protect them as much as you are able to from false teachers who might arise from within the congregation or from without. I close my charge echoing Peter's words, "¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
 - ii. Brother Gary Nieman, brother Duane Anderson, and brother Russ Draeger, do you in the presence of God and of these Christians over whom you will have the oversight promise to the best of your ability and with God's help to see that the disciples within this congregation receive sound and complete spiritual guidance to guard them from spiritual danger, and to direct them wisely in serving the Lord so long as it is fitting that you should serve as elders.
 1. Do you, brother Gary Nieman?
 - a. I do.
 2. Do you, brother Duane Anderson?
 - a. I do.
 3. Do you, brother Russ Draeger?
 - a. I do.
 - iii. (Adapted from *Ordination Service of Elders and Deacons: Southwest Church of Christ, Los Angeles, CA March 8, 1959*).
- b. Brothers and sisters, please stand.
- i. These are the three men whom you have selected to oversee and shepherd you. To assure them, to publically acknowledge them, and to express your approval of their appointment, I ask you to answer to following question:
 - ii. Do you, as a member of the Spencer church of Christ, publicly acknowledge and commend these men to be your overseers, and do you agree to submit yourselves to them, to obey them in all things that God has commanded them as bishops of the church to require of you?
 - iii. Please affirm by saying, I do.
 1. I do.
- c. Brother Gary Nieman, brother Duane Anderson, and brother Russ Draeger have agreed to serve as elders and to do so to the best of their ability. We have agreed to recognize them as such and to submit to their biblical authority.
- d. Brother Don, could you please lead us in prayer as we commit and commend these men to God?
- i. Brother Don leads prayer.
- e. The congregation may be seated.



- f. Consistent with biblical example, I now lay my hands on each of you to set you apart for the work of the eldership.
 - i. Shake each man's hand and lay left hand on each.
- g. I present you, your elders.
- h. You may take your seats.

8. Invitation

- a. What an awesome day! About the only thing that could make it even more wonderful, is if someone here today obeyed the gospel.
- b. Our shepherds need some more souls to watch over and lead!
- c. We urge you to become a Christian this morning:
 - i. Believe in Jesus (**John 3:16**).
 - ii. Repent (**Acts 2:38**).
 - iii. Confess Jesus is Lord (**Romans 10:9-10**).
 - iv. Be baptized (**Mark 16:16**).
 - v. Live righteously (**Revelation 2:10**).
- d. If you'd like to obey the gospel today, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing.
- e. Let us stand and sing.

