



THE REFLECTOR

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Elders in every church . . .

"And when they had appointed for them elders in every church..." (Acts 14:23). The passage before us contains the earliest mention of the appointment of elders, yet these were by no means the first elders appointed. Paul and Barnabas, when sent to Jerusalem with a contribution for the poor saints, delivered it to "the elders" (Acts 11:30). This shows that there were elders in the churches in Judea. Titus was left in Crete that he might set in order the things that were omitted, and appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). James took it for granted that the churches he addressed ordinarily had elders, by directing in his general epistle, that the sick should call for the elders of the church, to pray for them and anoint them with oil, with a view of their recovery (James 5:14). Several congregations that have been established for years still do not have elders. In view of Bible teaching on elders the situation points up the need for more serious concern in many places.

This is a curious situation, and is approximately equal to claiming that we have business but no managers, or organizations without leaders. Such things just do not happen, but are caused by sinful neglect (in all cases where qualified men exist but are not appointed, or where no effort is made to develop qualified men). Two equally bad situations exist among such churches: (1) Some such congregations have what we may call "acting elders," whether or not we acknowledge the truth of their eldership. These congregations have men functioning as elders; it does not make a particle of difference (from a practical standpoint) if we give them the title elders or not. From a religious standpoint it does matter.

(2) In many churches, no one "takes hold" or "acts" on matters which need attention. Many functions of the local church are crippled or totally neglected. Try as we will, we cannot effectively get around troublesome passages such as Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. As usual the Bible condemns our arrangements whenever we try to do things our way rather than follow scriptural commands and examples.

Churches in the first situation above have often had men who guided and oversaw the congregations down through the years. These men are elders (in practice) in every sense of the word, and sometimes good ones, too. Their leadership is accepted almost without question by the congregation. The only thing lacking is the formal acknowledgment that these men are elders and have been carrying on the business of that high calling for years. Why are they not scripturally appointed and recognized? That is a good question, but unfortunately there is no ready answer. The simplest and most painful answer would most likely be the rebelliousness of the congregation and its stiffnecked determination not to give in to clear scriptural authority. The congregation has decided that elders are not needed and prefer to operate without them. They seem to think "we have always gotten along without appointing elders, so why should we do so now?" It would appear that the congregations in question do not consider 1 Pet. 5:2 to be very important and have agreed to ignore that and other annoying passages.

When we refuse to follow divine commands on the eldership, we are crippling the church and therefore depriving ourselves of the divine plan for carrying out our primary mission: to carry the gospel to the world. All other functions of the church are impaired, too, when God's plan and wisdom are not respected. If a congregation has qualified men but no elders or is making no effort to develop them, then that congregation is to that extent in error.

Not only do we need to study this subject, a lot of us need to do something about it. How much longer can this or that congregation go hobbling along in direct disobedience to the Lord's command? It is strange that we are so sensitive about some errors, and so willing to accept others with non-chalance. We would disfellowship a man for playing an instrument of music when we are singing praises to God. We are not nearly so excited about men taking over the flock and being "lords over God's heritage" (1 Pet. 5:3) without any scriptural authority for their actions. When we encourage or allow men to "take hold" of positions and functions without the divine method of appointment, we are encouraging them to "take hold" also of authority beyond that intended by God even for scriptural elders. In other words, such men are likely to become tyrants or dictators, as the sad experience of some churches show. The Lord has commanded that congregations be led by elders and has gone into detail as to the qualifications of such men. We can see and know those within our congregation who possess the traits that fit men to be overseers of God's people.

What must an elder be? See 2 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-14. Those qualifications may displease and disappoint many of us. That is too bad, because the Lord provided them. As a people we always have a number of reasons ready to explain our shortcomings, and no doubt there are numerous explanations as to how a congregation can follow the Bible and still have elders who are unseen or unknown. Nevertheless, He does not leave any convenient loop-holes. We must approach the study of these scriptures with the conviction that they are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We realize that an appeal to the scriptures for our authority carries very little weight with those who do not regard the scriptures as inspired of God, hence, our concern and efforts are directed toward those who receive "the word of the message not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13).

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Is TV having an evil influence on us?

Television has a tremendous effect on our lives because we spend many hours watching and listening to it. Much of what we see and hear on television is being absorbed by our minds; therefore, it influences our thinking and behavior. If the information we receive through television is contrary to the principles found in the Bible, then it will lead us into an ungodly way of life. Those who are in control of determining what material will be shown on television have a great responsibility resting upon them to see that television is used as an instrument for good and not evil.

Unfortunately, those who are in charge of the programs on television have no fear of God or respect for His Word. I am deeply concerned over the devastating effect television is having upon our morals. Satan has gained almost complete control of this medium. Sin is glorified on most programs. You know that the above statements are right.

The morality of this nation is deteriorating. The proof of this is seen in

the increasing rate of crime, abortion, rate of divorce, number of couples living together without being married, number of people who engage in homosexual acts; adult book stores; pornographic literature, etc. Most television programs encourage people to participate in all manner of wickedness. Sinful activity such as fornication, adultery, petting, lying, swearing, stealing, murdering, etc., is promoted by television as a smart thing to do. Most programs have endorsed evil so long and so much that we cannot discern between good and evil. We have become accustomed to hearing and seeing filth so long that we are no longer embarrassed by it and have gradually accepted it into our lives. We had better wake up to what is happening to us, why it is happening, and put a stop to it or we will feel the wrath of God!

So, the answer to the question, "Is television having an evil influence on us?" is a definite, "Yes!" Television has changed through the years and the change has not been for the better. Today, producers feel that programs must deal with shocking subject matter or people will not watch it. Believing this, they have saturated most programs with scenes of actors in intimate embraces, discussing the most delicate subjects with suggestive and lewd language. These actors do not hesitate to disrobe themselves or allow their bodies to be caressed. All of this is being seen and accepted by millions of viewers as the normal way to live. Our sense of shame is destroyed. Our conscience is seared. Jeremiah said, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush..." (Jer. 8:12).

Billy Graham recently said, "Prime time TV is now the biggest threat to the nation's morality." He went on to say, "If we fail to recognize and reverse the present downhill course, we risk the total abandonment of the high morals on which America was founded."

I do not believe you can watch television at night for a period of four hours without viewing scenes, or hearing words, which are designed to arouse lustful thoughts and desires. Most programs have women, and sometimes men, that are immodestly clothed. If you think you can watch that which is filthy without being adversely effected by it, you are deceived! You cannot have a pure mind while you fill it with that which is impure. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..." (Prov. 23:7).

We become greatly upset with those who pollute our water and air, but encourage those who pollute our minds and the minds of our children. How foolish we are, for our minds are far more valuable than the air we breathe and the water we drink! You can drink polluted water and still go to heaven, but you can not go to heaven with a polluted and corrupted mind.

We, as parents, had better wake up to the fact that all manner of filth and wickedness is being daily poured into our homes by means of television. We must begin censoring what we and our children are watching. The same know that turns your television on can also turn it off. (We may not be able to control what is SHOWN on TV, but we can control what is WATCHED - Editor). It saddens me to know that the minds of our children are being corrupted by television, and we are permitting this to happen with very little protest. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

..... Don R. Hastings, 111 S. 19th Ct., Dade City, FL 33525

Volume 20

As you can see on page one, this begins Volume 20 of this paper. 20 years of publication by this church! Almost ten years have passed since the present editor began his work here. How time flies.

We have made mistakes, we just trust that the good that we have done will somehow outweigh the mistakes. We hope to improve the content of future volumes. We appreciate all the mail received regarding our efforts, even though we have not been very efficient in answering mail.

The mechanics of getting this paper out is time consuming. We have not always been on time. Hopefully this will improve. We plan, at least for a while, to use the newsletter style of layout. This will allow us to type the material much more rapidly. Such should leave us with more time and energy for writing articles.

We will continue to lift articles, such as the two fine ones in this issue, from other papers. Admittedly, this has been done often as a time saver. But there are some articles written and printed by others that actually beat (can you believe that!) what we could write -- thing we could not have said better.

We would like to hear from our readers as to what they think of the paper -- even if it is not complimentary. When we hear from you, it makes us think that we are doing more than just sending out dead letters.

Editor.



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Second Class
Postage Paid
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AL 35068

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

<i>Bible Classes</i>	9:45 AM
<i>Worship</i>	10:45 AM
<i>Worship</i>	6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY:

<i>Ladies Bible Class (Oct-May)</i>	10:00 AM
<i>Bible Classes</i>	7:30 PM