

The Appointment of Brian Dowler to the Eldership
10/19/08

Today is a wonderful day for the church family here at Camp Hill. At the conclusion of the sermon this morning, we will be appointing Brian Dowler to the eldership. This is a great thing because it communicates extremely important messages.

1) It communicates the value of quality leaders.

We are in the midst of the federal elections and voters are using the many qualities of the many candidates for the choice of their leaders. Some of the qualities of these leaders that people are basing their decisions on are quite worldly. That might be fine in the earthly realm for the selection of leaders, but in the church, the primary leaders, the elders, are to have qualities of a very high degree.

- 1 Tim 3:2-7 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. 4 {He must be} one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 {and} not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside {the church,} so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.
- Titus 1:7-9 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Address to Brian Dowler and the Congregation:

You are a good man that has striven for God. You are respected, gentle, sober-minded and down to earth. You are a good listener and well respected both in and out of the church. You are a good communicator, teacher and quite hospitable. These are the developed qualities of a life dedicated in loving and serving God and His people. This is what God expects in the selection of leaders in order to be effective in the work of the church. The position of an elder in the church carries with it the highest standards for a man. Today, once again, we are confirming that we want quality leaders based on the word and the will of God.

2) It communicates the value of empowerment.

One of the greatest biotic principles to the numeric and spiritual growth of a congregation is the ability to empower leadership. By empowering good leadership, the younger will receive good guidance. Without it, the less-matured souls are left to fend for themselves and with it the people will receive direction. *Judg 21:25 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

It says volumes when a congregation has six elders and still has room to empower another. There are congregations both near and far that would give anything to have the

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leadership that we have in this congregation, but they do not. There are some congregations that I have personally attended that have hundreds and even over a thousand that have not had an eldership in decades or in the history of the congregation. There was a congregation that a few of the brothers and I visited that had over a thousand members and had been in existence for over a half century, yet did not ever bring forth two elders for an eldership.

- Sometimes the claim is made that there are not any qualified men to fill the role, but that is rare. If the men of the congregation are taking serious their obligation to raise their families in the Lord and living for God, the elders will come.
- Sometimes there are evangelists in the congregation that out of pride or fear are unwilling to allow an eldership to come forth. They feel threatened and out of the power-seat and take the role of a Diotrephes in 3 Jn 1:9 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.
- Sometimes it is the fear of submitting to leadership in general in the congregation. I have actually known congregations in the past to be addicted to the business meeting structure rather than what is God-approved.

When we appoint Brian Dowler as an elder this morning, we must rejoice for it shows our seriousness in the empowerment of others. God will allow us great success in our plans, for our plans are more likely to follow God when we empower men of God to lead.

3) It communicates the value of the task at hand.

There are many responsibilities in the church family that need oversight. There is education, correction, discipline, finances, encouragement, evangelism, visiting and collective worship just to name a few. When a congregation uses the qualities of biblical leadership and empowers the eldership, the task at hand of going to heaven and leading others in that path is more than likely going to take place. When you see another elder appointed into the eldership of the congregation this morning, feel the joy in your heart, for you know the congregation is taking serious the task that is at hand. You want to be held accountable to God; therefore you appointed Godly men to lead you in the right way.

Harry Truman, the thirty-third President of the United States, had a sign on his desk stating, "The Buck Stops Here". It was used to negate the Washington practice of always passing the buck when it came time for the acceptance of responsibility in their actions. Elders of a congregation are on the line to make sure that the work of the church is being done. They are not to do it alone, but to lead by example and making the tough decisions as men of God.

- When a congregation splits into factions, it is often the result of division at the top.
- When education fails in a congregation, it is more than likely because the eldership has failed in their task to know and teach the truth.

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- When discipline in the lives of the church is getting out of control, it is more that likely the eldership was not behaving like and eldership.
- When the congregation is not being fiscally responsible, it is usually due to a lack of leadership in the eldership.

When you entrust your souls under the oversight of mature men of God, you are saying you are taking serious the task that is at hand. There are many congregations that cannot make that claim for they have nobody that is willing to have the Buck Stop With Them. You trust their leadership and they trust in Christ and His leadership. They have a great responsibility that rests on their shoulders. If you only knew half of how much planning and praying these men go through for the congregation you would be twice as pleased as you already are. They are willing to take the heat because they knew the seriousness of the task at hand.

In Closing: There is good reason to be very pleased this morning as we appoint Brian Dowler as another elder to our congregation. It communicates that we see the need for qualified leaders, that we desire to empower leadership and that we are serious about the task at hand.

Closing Story: The Highest Office...Really?

James Garfield was the twentieth President of the United States. Prior to his election as president, Garfield served as a major general in the United States Army and as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and as a member of the Electoral Commission of 1876. Garfield was the second U.S. President to be assassinated; Abraham Lincoln was the first. President Garfield, a Republican, had been in office a scant four months when he was shot and fatally wounded on July 2, 1881. To date, Garfield is the only sitting member of the House of Representatives to have been elected President.

Garfield was a minister and an elder for the Disciples of Christ, making him the first preacher to serve as President. He is also claimed as a member of the Church of Christ, as the different branches did not split until the 20th century. When Garfield relinquished his position on the eldership of the church, it is said that he stated, "I resign the highest office in the land to become President of the United States."

Garfield understood that the qualities of an eldership in the church were the highest that a man could attain. The office of the President of the United States was a step down for him, having already understood that real leadership is to lead spiritually and by example.