

Appointing Elders

Numbers 27:15–17 (NKJV)

Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: **16** “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, **17** who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.”

Acts 1:15–20 (NKJV)

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, **16** “Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; **17** for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” ... **20** “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and, ‘Let another take his office.’

Acts 1:21–26 (NKJV)

“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, **22** beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” **23** And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. **24** And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen **25** to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” **26** And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Appointing of Matthias – Acts 1

- Declaration of need – v. 22
- Declaration of qualifications necessary – v. 21-22
- Candidates proposed by the congregation – v. 15, 23
- Prayer for God's guidance – v. 24-25
- Selection by lot – v. 26
- Acknowledgement of Matthias' apostleship – v. 26

Acts 6:1–7 (NKJV)

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. **2** Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. **3** Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; **4** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Acts 6:1–7 (NKJV)

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, **6** whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. **7** Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Appointing of the Seven – Acts 6

- Declaration of need – v. 2-3
- Declaration of qualifications necessary – v. 3
- Candidates proposed by congregation – v. 2, 5
- Prayer – v. 6
- Laying on of hands in acknowledgment of their new role – v. 6

Acts 11:28–30 (NKJV)

Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. **29** Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. **30** This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Appointment of Elders in Jerusalem

- No information given about how they were selected or appointed
- They are mentioned again in Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18

Acts 12:25–13:3 (NKJV)

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark. **1** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **3** Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Appointment of Barnabas and Saul for Evangelistic Work – Acts 13

- Called by divine revelation
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Laying on of hands in acknowledgement of their new role

Acts 14:21–23 (NKJV)

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” **23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Appointment of Elders in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch – Acts 13

- Occurred some time after the churches were established
- Appointed in every church
- Appointed by Paul and Barnabas, who had preached the gospel there
- Prayer
- Fasting

Acts 20:17–28 (NKJV)

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. **18** And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, **19** serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; **20** how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, **21** testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:17–28 (NKJV)

... **26** Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. **27** For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. **28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Appointment of Elders in Ephesus

- No information given about how they were selected or appointed

1 Timothy 3:1–2 (NKJV)

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. **2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

Appointment of Elders in Ephesus

- Declaration of qualifications
- No additional information given about appointment

Titus 1:5–6 (NKJV)

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—**6** if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

Appointment of Elders in Crete

- Appointed in every city
- Appointed by Titus, who preached there
- Declaration of qualifications

Observations Concerning the Appointment of Elders

- Those who proclaim the gospel are responsible to appoint elders in every church
- Those appointed must be qualified
- A complete pattern for how to appoint elders is not provided in the New Testament
- We have liberty to use our best judgment in the process we use to select men for this role

Suggestion of Process

- Declaration of need and of qualifications necessary
- Prayer, both public and private
- Fasting by those who are inclined to do so
- The congregation proposes candidates
- The preacher evaluates candidates for willingness to serve and qualifications
- Announcement of prospective elders to congregation
- Period for congregation to express any concerns or questions to prospective elders
- The preacher does a final evaluation of prospective elders
- Public acknowledgement of new elders

A Prayer for the Appointment of Elders

Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set men over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.