

TO ELDERS AND DEACONS OF THE CHURCH

Jose Imanus, a comedian of many years ago played the part of an astronaut who was about to be the first one shot into orbit around the world. In the skit, he was being interviewed by reporters who asked him how he felt about making the trip. He said, "I feel very nervous! How would you feel if you were about to be shot into space in an experimental vehicle with 10,000 parts, each one of which was made by the lowest bidder?"

I am sure the members here are very proud of each one of you, and have chosen you because they see you as persons of dignity, maturing in your ability to understand and live according to the Holy Scriptures, not two-faced, not wine-bibbers, not dishonest in business, and of good report by those who know you. The congregation has tested you and concluded that you have stood the test to become Elders and Deacons. You have also been found faithful to one wife who shares your strength of faith and depth of commitment. You are seen as men of ordered households who are training well your own children, and therefore can be trusted to be leaders of the Lord's children (I Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 1:1-4).

The Scriptures tell us that as Deacons carry out their assignments, they become recipients of a very special promise: "You obtain for yourselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 3:13). I am sure this same promise is there as well for Elders.

Your basic task is to constantly improve in your ability to be fruitful Elders and Deacons. Your position is not an honorary one, but rather a commitment to serve God's family. Neither is your position primarily one of making decisions, nor is it primarily a power position, but rather a commitment to service (we hear a lot of public prayers asking the Lord to help the leaders make good decisions, but seldom do we hear prayers asking that the leaders be strengthened and guided in their ability to lead and nurture the flock). It is good to remember that you are voluntary leaders who are leading voluntary followers.

One of your most basic charges in Scripture is found in Ephesians 4:11-16 which says you are to help people find their own ministries according to their gifts, assuring you that when this happens, the church will grow in all aspects in an atmosphere of love. Your charge is not to do the work of the church, but to lead in such a manner that the entire body is involved in doing the work of the church.

Typically Deacons are assigned to special groups with special tasks and guided in their fulfillment by the Elders. Your groups are to be the dynamic centers for growth and spiritual maturing as the congregation goes about its world-wide mission. To that end, I conclude with the following recommendations for success:

1. Commit yourselves to praying daily for these ministries and for the Elders and Deacons that lead them.
2. Pray daily that God will guide you in using your talents, and also in discovering new talents that are now latent within you.
3. Pray daily for the Lord's help in doing high quality work in the areas to which you have been assigned. "He who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys" (Prov. 18:9). "Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9:10).
4. Remember you are working for the Lord, and not to obtain human recognition, or fame! "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col. 3:23-24).
5. Someone has said "If the Lord gets you into it, He will get you through it." Trust in the Lord's promise that you can do all that is in His will for you to do by the strength which He supplies (Phil. 4:13). In fact, He has promised that even in your most creative requests for His guidance, you will not even come close to what He is willing and able to supply! (Eph. 3:20-21). Someone has said, "If the Lord is your partner, make your plans bigger!"

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