**When Things are Lacking**

*Titus 1:5*

**Introduction**

1. Paul gave Titus a reason for leaving him in Crete – **Titus 1:5** – Set in order things that are lacking:
   1. Several matters are obviously on Paul’s mind as he writes Titus.
   2. The first concerned the appointment of elders.
2. A church is “lacking” when it does not have an eldership.
   1. There is something missing in a congregation when elders are not present.
   2. Lacking – *leipō* – “to be deficient in something that ought to be present for whatever reason, lack” (BDAG)
3. Since it is obviously God’s intention for congregations to have elders, what should be the case for those who don’t have elders?
   1. What should their attitude toward the subject be?
   2. What should be their approach?
   3. Are there any actions that can and should be taken that are related to the subject of the eldership?
   4. Should they just table any consideration of the subject due to their current situation?
4. Elders in the Will of God
5. God’s Design of the Church Includes Elders
   1. **Acts 11:27-30** – first time elders are mentioned in the church.
      1. Had been elders for some time, but not always.
      2. Consider: the funds were being sent to the elders to disperse properly.
         1. **Acts 4:35** – funds laid at apostles’ feet and such is distributed by them.
         2. **Acts 6:3-4** – Apostles delegated the responsibility of dispersing funds to “seven men” who met certain qualifications.
         3. Where the pattern would later be to put the funds under the control of the elders, the apostles were given the responsibility early on.
      3. Not elders in churches of Judea prior to Acts 6, but sometime between that and Acts 11:30 elders were appointed.
   2. **Acts 14:23** – Paul returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and appointed elders.
      1. NOTE: ***“EVERY CHURCH”*** – this was not a matter of preference.
      2. 1st missionary journey initiated by the HS – **Acts 13:2-3**
         1. ***“the work to which I have called them”*** – What Paul did on this journey was directed by the HS.
         2. **Acts 14:27-28; 15:12** – gave reports concerning God’s work in them among the Gentiles – confirmed by miracles and signs.
         3. The establishment of an eldership in every church is clearly God’s plan.
   3. Paul wrote Timothy to inform of proper conduct within the household of God – **1 Timothy 3:14-15**
      1. Theme of the epistle – namely, proper conduct in the church – along with some personal instruction for Timothy.
      2. He was to take these things and teach them to the church – **1 Timothy 4:6, 16**
      3. **1 Timothy 3:1** – instruction concerning elders (bishop – overseer).
   4. Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders – **Titus 1:5**
      1. Paul established churches on the island but left before things were fully set in order.
      2. As Paul acted by the authority of God, his leaving Titus to appoint elders was by God’s will.
   5. As it is God’s will and design for churches to have elders it should be the goal and effort of every church to have elders.
      1. **Romans 1:11** – Like Paul, we should have the desire to be “established.” (With Rome it was spiritual gifts that would help, with a church lacking elders it would be elders.)
   6. With this in mind, there are four possible ways a church may exist.
6. Scripturally Organized
   1. A church with qualified elders according to God’s pattern.
   2. A church with a desire to adhere to God’s pattern – **2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 8:5**
   3. Knowing it is God’s will for the church to have elders, they sought out men with the qualifications – **cf. Acts 6:3** (concerning a different appointment, but notice – “seek out from among you”)
      1. The establishment of an eldership doesn’t just happen but is something sought out by the church.
      2. “seek out” – *episkeptomai* – “to make a careful inspection, look at, examine, inspect” (BDAG)
      3. **1 Timothy 3:2** (then MUST be); **Titus 1:6** (IF a man is) – seeking of men who possess the qualifications.
      4. A scripturally organized congregation is one who has found these men after careful inspection and have thus appointed them.
   4. Such a congregation needs to be regularly reminded what the work of an elder is as well as the authority they possess, and what the congregation’s responsibilities are to the eldership.
7. Scripturally Unorganized
   1. A church without elders due to a lack of qualified men according to God’s pattern.
   2. This church is also one who equally desires to hold to the pattern and has equally sought out qualified men. However, they did not find such men, so no such men were appointed.
   3. Must understand and acknowledge they are lacking – **Titus 1:5**
   4. The seeking out of qualified men is to be considered from the perpetual perspective:
      1. Manifested in aim toward growth – **Ephesians 4:11-14**
      2. To a mature man, no longer children – individual goals, but congregational as well.
   5. This church must fight contentment with the status-quo.
      1. There cannot be an acceptance of the congregation never having elders. Such is dangerous.
8. Unscripturally Organized
   1. A church with unqualified elders contrary to God’s pattern.
   2. This church either has a rebellious spirit, or a terrible ignorance concerning the need for elders, and the accompanying qualifications.
   3. Consider the reason for the qualifications listed:
      1. **1 Timothy 3:4-7** – all qualifications have reasons, but these three are specified.
      2. **(vv. 4-5)** – He is to be a caretaker, leader, and ruler (authority) in the church – exhibited in domestic affairs.
      3. **(v. 6)** – Experienced, and therefore does not have pride from being appointed – how can a novice lead, or a man of pride persuade.
      4. **(v. 7)** – Good reputation – reproach will come upon the church with an evil reputation in a man who is leading, and such a reputation outside the church leaves plenty temptation to return. (How can he protect the flock when he can’t protect himself?)
      5. ALL QUALIFICATIONS HAVE LOGICAL AND IMPORTANT REASONS BEHIND THEM – NONE CAN BE DISMISSED.
      6. THE APPOINTMENT OF MEN WHO ARE UNQUALIFIED IN ANY WAY IS A REBELLION AGAINST THE HS, AND RECIPE FOR DISASTER.
   4. Paul’s instruction to Timothy – **1 Timothy 5:21-22, 24-25**
      1. The appointment of elders is not to be a hasty process.
      2. It takes great attention, and careful thought LEST UNQUALIFIED MEN ARE APPOINTED.
   5. Example – Diotrephes – **3 John 9-10**
      1. Seems to be in a position of authority – preeminence, forbids, putting them out (withdrawal?)
      2. Maybe an elder – not known.
      3. Qualifications possibly missing – **Titus 1:7** (not self-willed)
9. Unscripturally Unorganized
   1. A church with men qualified to be elders according to God’s pattern that refuses to appoint elders.
   2. This church is in rebellion:
      1. It is God’s will that a congregation appoint elders when men are found to be qualified. This is not a preference, but a command.
      2. **2 Corinthians 2:9** – the command to withdraw from the sexually immoral man was a test of obedience to the congregation as a whole.
      3. When a congregation refuses to conform to the pattern set in scripture they are not “obedient in all things.”
   3. Likely has a problem with humility, and submission to authority – **1 Peter 5:2, 5** (overseers, submit); **Hebrews 13:17** (obey, submissive, rule) – elders have authority given by God – must be obeyed.
      1. Some don’t want elders so they can have more control.
   4. Possibly a congregation who has a distaste for the eldership pattern:
      1. Bad past experiences with corrupt eldership?
      2. Of the opinion that the congregation is functioning just fine without them?
      3. Of the opinion that elders would somehow make things worse?
   5. Must understand God’s ways are better – **Isaiah 55:8-9** – and that no elders means you’re lacking – **Titus 1:5**
10. **It should be the goal of every congregation to be “scripturally organized” according to God’s will. This takes understanding, and effort 🡪**
11. Working Toward God’s Will Concerning Elders
12. Understanding the Need for Elders and Their Work
    1. What is the reason a congregation without elders is lacking? – **Titus 1:5**
    2. Consider the terms for elders:
       1. Elder – *presbyteros* – “an old man, an elder,” (VINE)
          1. He is experienced, not a novice – **1 Timothy 3:6** – novice – *neophytos*; newly planted, i.e. (figuratively) a young convert. (STRONG)
          2. Must not be new to Christianity – how could he teach, learn, be an example of what he himself is new to?
       2. Bishop/Overseer – *episkopos* – “a superintendent” (STRONG); “one who has the responsibility of safeguarding or seeing to it that something is done in the correct way, guardian” (BDAG)
          1. Denotes RULING – authority.
          2. One experienced in the word of God – Knows the right way.
          3. One who is submissive himself in the right way – is fit to look over the conduct of the church and lead properly.
       3. Pastor/Shepherd – *poimēn* – “a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks” (VINE); “one who serves as guardian or leader, shepherd” (BDAG)
          1. Protects the church from spiritual danger.
          2. Feeds the church spiritual food.
          3. Leads the church down the spiritual path of the Chief Shepherd.
       4. Jesus is our ultimate leader, our King. But in His wisdom God saw it fit to delegate leadership to certain qualified men – the church needs leadership, accountability, exhortation, admonition, teaching, correction, and discipline.
    3. Any duties of an elder are confined:
       1. To the flock among them – **1 Peter 5:2**
       2. To the standard of Christ – **1 Peter 5:4**
    4. Examples to the Flock – **1 Peter 5:3** – examples of a mature Christian following Christ – **cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1** – NOT EXCLUSIVLY LEADING BY EXAMPLE – they have authority and command – ***“nor as being lords”*** – making decisions and commands without regard for the congregation and/or God’s word, making the church follow blindly.
       1. Take Heed to Self – **Acts 20:28** – elders must make sure they themselves are working on their faith, and their relationship with Christ.
          1. Are they in the faith – **2 Corinthians 13:5**
          2. Is their home in order – **1 Timothy 3:4-5**
          3. Are they praying, studying, teaching, exhorting, etc.
       2. Take Heed to the Word of God – **Acts 20:25-28** – the admonition for them to take heed to themselves was preceded by Paul’s preaching of the whole counsel of God.
          1. Able to teach – **1 Timothy 3:2**
          2. Able to exhort and convict – **Titus 1:9**
          3. Requires constant attention in God’s word – **1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:15**
    5. Overseers – **1 Peter 5:2** – implies watching over the functions of the congregation – work (edification, evangelism, benevolence), worship, behavior, etc. – is it all scriptural – is it done decently and in order – **1 Corinthians 14:40**
       1. Rule Well – **1 Timothy 5:17** – shows that an elder does not just get to do what he wants – ultimately according to God’s commands – **Hebrews 13:17** (they will give account to God)
       2. Stop Any Sin and Error – The elders have the authority of God to put an end to matters contradicting truth.
          1. **Titus 1:9-14** – they don’t sit idly by and let error and vain talk spread, but they put a stop to it.
          2. **1 Thessalonians 5:12** – they admonish the church with the word of God – includes the correction of sin.
          3. **2 Thessalonians 3:6** – administer punitive discipline along with the congregation to any who are unwilling to repent.
       3. Watch for Wolves – **Acts 20:28-31** – watch for false teachers.
          1. Consider – what preacher will be hired? Gospel meeting preachers, etc.
          2. No partiality, but known by fruits – **Matthew 7:15-20**
          3. Requires a knowledge of God’s word – **Ephesians 4:14** – must be able to identify error.
       4. Watch for the Souls of the Church/Flock – **Acts 20:28** – take heed to flock.
          1. **Hebrews 13:17** – charged with responsibility to watch out for souls. (why they teach, admonish, correct, discipline, etc.) (IT IS THEIR BUSINESS)
       5. Feed the Flock – **1 Peter 5:1-2** – shepherd (verb) – feed.
          1. Spiritual food – word of God.
          2. **1 Timothy 3:2** – able to teach.
          3. THE FEEDING IS NOT MERELY DELGATED TO OTHERS (PREACHER, TEACHERS) – ELDERS SHOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN TEACHING.
    6. Elders are spiritual leaders of a congregation with authority from Christ. They live God’s word, teach and enforce it in the congregation. (NOT EXAMPLES ONLY, AND NOT LIKE A BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR A BUSINESS – NOTE: their authority in regard to church funds is such a small matter in the grand scheme of their labor.)
    7. No wonder a congregation without them is lacking – **Titus 1:5** – shouldn’t all congregations desire this!
13. Working Toward the Goal of Elders Requires Laying the Foundation of Knowledge
    1. Knowledge of their work.
    2. Knowledge of the qualifications.
    3. NOTE: This is not something that should be studied only when the immediate potential for an eldership is present but is groundwork that must be laid well ahead if there ever is to be the organization of God’s will. (Part of teaching the whole counsel of God – **Acts 20:27**)
    4. Also required is the cultivation in the members of the congregation of the character elders are to possess.
14. Cultivating Character in Ourselves and the Youth
    1. If an elder is an example to all of the flock, then all should have the aspiration of at least being “like” an elder – **1 Peter 5:2**
       1. They are mature Christians – **Ephesians 4:13** – we should all desire maturity in Christ.
       2. **1 Timothy 3:2-7** – are any of these qualifications exclusive to elders? (Obviously the domestic realm will have differences for female Christians.)
    2. Parents should be raising their children to be faithful Christians – **Ephesians 6:4**
       1. Consider Timothy – **2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15** – not an elder (was a youth), but faithful Christian capable of preaching God’s word (ELDER POTENTIAL)
    3. Congregationally – **Titus 1:5** – understanding the lacking condition should lead to the aspirations of having an eldership.
       1. More diligence in edifying – **Ephesians 4:16** – extra bible studies (men’s and women’s study), opportunities to teach (invitations, bible classes, fill in preaching), etc.
       2. Stressing the need – one common problem is that less men are desiring the position of a bishop.
          1. The desire is a qualification – **1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2** – if the desire is not there they are not fit to serve.
          2. However, if everything is set in place in regard to the character of a qualified man, AND THAT MAN HAS BEEN CONDITIONED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE URGENT NEED OF ELDERS, THAT DESIRE WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSLEF – ABOUT BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED, AND MATURE.
15. It may be that a congregation is without elders (**cf. Titus 1:5** – “scripturally unorganized”). However, they MUST possess the attitude of desiring elders, and there are actions that CAN and MUST be taken as steps in that direction.

**Conclusion**

1. It is God’s will and design that a congregation have elders – this is true for ALL congregations.
2. It is not a preference, but a decree of God.
3. It should therefore be apparent that a church without elders is lacking **(Titus 1:5**).
4. It should therefore be a goal of every congregation without elders to one day have them.