

# Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

## AN OPEN LETTER TO GARLAND ELKINS, DAVE MILLER AND MILLER'S SUPPORTERS

John D. Rose

### Introduction

This author had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with Garland Elkins on July 22, 2008. Brother Elkins has been a valiant soldier of the Cross, preaching the Truth to congregations across the United States and abroad. He has debated denominationalists, written numerous lectureship manuscripts, authored and/or edited numerous books and tracts, was the associate editor of *The Spiritual Sword*, and co-director of the annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship. Brother Elkins has had a great influence for good over many years. It is with great regret that this author must say that that righteous influence has been marred by unlawful fellowship practices. That is the purpose of this open letter.

Brother Elkins, along with many others, has determined that fellowship can be extended to false teachers even though the Bible strictly forbids such (Eph. 5:11, 2 John 9-11, 1 John 4:1). Dave Miller has publicly taught the following false doctrines: the re-evaluation/re-affirmation of elders (at the Brown Trail Church of Christ) and error concerning marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. Though brother Miller has done this, and NOT repented, many brethren have accepted him in his unrepentant state. It is in answer to such error that these pages have been written.

At the conclusion of this article, the reader will find a letter written to Garland Elkins from this author. The letter was sent and no response was received. Brother Elkins has chosen not to respond, which is sad indeed. If the Truth were on the side of those that support brother Miller, why have they chosen to be silent? In order for the reader to have a proper understanding of the letter, some background information

is necessary. That information is presented in the following summation.

### The Account of the Meeting

During the fourth week of July, 2008, Garland Elkins was preaching a Gospel meeting at the Maynard Church of Christ, in Maynard, Arkansas. The author was living in Pocahontas, Arkansas (a few miles south of Maynard), at the time, and preaching for the Dalton Church of Christ. The author and brother Elkins had become acquainted while the author was a student at the Memphis School of Preaching (2005-2007). Elkins called and suggested a meeting at the Bonanza restaurant, in Pocahontas. The author agreed to the meeting and subsequently contacted brother Elkins and requested that the Dave Miller issue be discussed, to which he consented. The author and his wife met with brother Elkins the afternoon of the twenty-second. When the subject of Dave Miller was broached, the author stated that he had started to examine the facts of the matter (which thing this author had said he would do while still a student at MSOP and which was stated plainly to both Garland Elkins and Curtis Cates). Brother Elkins said that was what mattered. He then produced a hand-written note (which he had written and signed, previous to the meeting) and asked the author (and his wife) to sign. The note was an agreement not to speak to others about anything discussed at the meeting. Brother Elkins said he would not discuss these matters except the note be signed, but he did speak about the Miller issue, and at some length. He continued to ask several times after this, that the note be signed, though the author and his wife refused every request. Elkins cited being

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# Contending FOR THE Faith™

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August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

## Editorial...

### Character Assassins

Brother Garland Elkins' comments to brother John Rose, a recent graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching, reported by the latter in his article beginning on the front page of this issue of *CFTF*, is in a sad way very interesting. Furthermore, the ease with which certain supposedly faithful men have played the hypocrite while all the time working hard to remain willfully ignorant of the public facts pertaining to Dave Miller's sinful conduct is appalling. In his article Rose reveals Elkins' unbecoming manner in dealing with those who oppose Miller, et al. Since Elkins in his discussion with Rose called my name, I fail to see why he should take umbrage at our comments regarding his views and his manner of dealing with those who oppose Miller, et al.

When the trouble came to a head in the late 1980's, forcing brother Elkins to resign as the preacher for the Getwell Church of Christ, Memphis, TN, it was well understood by those who had the facts in hand regarding it that if brother Elkins had not resigned he would have been fired. I know that to be the case because the late brother Thomas Barfoot invited me to meet with him for the purpose of informing me about those sad events while I was attending the Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship not long after those problems at the Getwell church took place. Brother Barfoot was one of the longtime elders of the Getwell congregation at the time brother Elkins was forced to resign as the preacher for that church. He related to me the disposition of the Getwell elders at that time concerning brother Elkins being their preacher — two elders for him and two against him. Then a new elder was appointed who was opposed to brother Elkins being the preacher for Getwell. According to brother Barfoot, Elkins was urged by the two elders supporting him, as well as sister Elkins, to accept the preaching position with the Southaven Church of Christ, Southaven, MS, before he was fired at Getwell. Barfoot related that he informed Elkins it was urgent that Elkins accept the Southaven position quickly because he and the other elder defending him would not much longer be able to hold off his firing. Elkins resigned and accepted the preaching position at Southaven. Before God I lie not. Furthermore, if brother Elkins cared to do so he could testify to the factualness of my previous comments.

Ask yourself: *Was brother Elkins forced to resign? According to the evidence, would he have been fired if he had not resigned?* But, with Elkins it is another and different "ball of wax" when it comes to the *resig-*

nations of brethren Dub McClish and Dave Watson on July 20, 2005 from *The Gospel Journal*. If Elkins can see the facts bearing on his departure from the Getwell church, what is causing him not to see the same thing in the McClish and Watson resignations from *TGJ*? Also what is hindering Elkins from seeing “the why” of their resignations? Are there differences in the two cases? Of course there are differences, *but not when it comes to “Resign or be fired”*.

Concerning brother Dave Miller, his false teaching, his unwillingness to repent and other matters involved therein, whether publicly or privately, we have said and/or written the same. When Rose revealed that Elkins had called my name in their visit I was not surprised. For, this is not the first report I have heard about this kind of conduct of at least some in the Memphis School of Preaching—*brethren for whom in times past I had the highest regard*. And, they are not the only ones who have adopted this less than honorable approach to dealing with this matter.

Brother Elkins is astounded that I would take the position that “there’s not a sound school among us and called us hypocrites.” How much error regarding obligatory matters will God allow in a school, church or a Christian’s life before He ceases fellowship with him? *Do the cases of Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, along with Ananias and Saphira answer the previous question? Any one who teaches that it is scriptural to condemn a false doctrine, but continue to fellowship the false teacher, is teaching and practicing fatal error; thereby destroying the Biblical doctrine of fellowship*. Elkins knows this, but he has become, for whatever reason, blinded to his as well as others hypocrisy in this matter. We ask, Where is the school of preaching that has marked Dave Miller, called for his repentance and, since he has not repented, declared their cessation of fellowship with him? *Will Elkins write the name of that school on a piece of paper and sign it?* Rather than oppose Miller’s errors, calling on him to repent, Forest Hill’s preacher and MSOP faculty member Barry Grider told us that he and MSOP have *drawn a fellowship circle around the unrepentant Miller* — and, we wonder how many others of like or worse stripe he has encircled. Does Elkins have a problem with Grider’s “circle”? If he does not, we remember a time when he would have.

Then brother Rose informs us that Elkins brought my family into their discussion. It is truly amazing that when it comes to Miller’s teaching on elder re-evaluation/reaffirmation at the Brown Trail Church of Christ, Elkins takes the absurd and unscriptural position that unless one was present to hear what Miller said regard-

ing elder R&R one could not reach a correct conclusion about Miller’s teaching on elder R&R. If Elkins is correct concerning understanding Dave Miller’s teaching at Brown Trail on elder R&R, why did he not follow his own guide-lines regarding reaching conclusions (very definite ones) when it comes to me and mine? No wonder that on more than one occasion he attempted to get brother and sister Rose to sign a document of his own contrivance in an attempt to keep the information in that meeting from becoming public. *How desperate can a man get?* Is this the same man that I looked up to as a young preacher for an example of righteous conduct?

As is true of other parents whose children are Christians (including brother Elkins’ children) my children are more than simply my children—they *are also my brethren in the Lord*. Thus, when Christians in anyone’s family bids God’s speed to one who teaches false doctrine, refusing to repent of their sinful conduct, they are out of fellowship with God and must be treated accordingly. If not, why not? *True or False — Erring brethren who refuse to repent must have the fellowship of faithful brethren withdrawn from them*.

Regardless of brother Elkins’ “think so” or not, as far as I can tell he will not be doing the judging on that last great day, but he will be judged by the same standard along with the rest of us (John 12:48; Rom. 14:10-12). *Brethren must deal with each other as the Bible teaches — not according to their own think so*. When, therefore, brethren are caught up in any kind of sin, refusing to repent, they must be dealt with as the New Testament teaches us to deal with erring brethren (Col. 3:17; Rom. 16:17-18). Brother Elkins, MSOP, et al., have that same Biblical responsibility as any Christian does. *Of what sin must one of brother Elkins’ children or grandchildren be guilty before he would withdraw fellowship from them?* Obviously, Elkins thinks he can oppose Miller’s false doctrine, fellowship Miller and God is pleased with him along with those who think and act as he does.

Miller taught his false doctrines to the church. *We did not*. Miller is the sower of discord. *We are not*. Beginning in 1990 to this present hour we opposed him, begging him all the time to repent. We have called on the church to act as the New Testament teaches regarding this and like matters. *How is that sowing discord in the church?* Until July 20, 2005 Elkins and friends were with us when we opposed Miller’s errors, but they are not with us now. *Since Miller is not repented, who is it that has changed?*

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued from page One)

“misrepresented” as the reason for the note.

Brother Elkins said, “David Brown said there’s not a sound school among us and called us hypocrites.” After this he asked, “Do you believe we are hypocrites?” The author said, “Yes.” He then asked the author if he was in fellowship with MSOP. The author answered, “No.” Elkins stated that he had read some of brother Miller’s sermon from 1990, when asked by the author. However, most of brother Elkins’ statements were centered around brother Miller’s stance on marriage, divorce, and re-marriage as was published in Miller’s public statement of 2005. He said that because Miller had declared that the marriage of Everett Chambers was illegal and unscriptural, that proved Miller’s repentance, even saying, “What else do you want him to say?” The author stated that if one sins publicly, he must repent publicly. Elkins agreed and declared that if mercy is not shown, one to another, how can anyone expect mercy from God at the judgment, and stated further, that if one repents it should be accepted because only God knows what is in that person’s heart. The author had brought a copy of Miller’s sermon and public statement to the meeting (these were left with brother Elkins when the meeting ended) and informed Elkins that there were no statements of repentance in Miller’s public release. Brother Elkins said that it was there and requested a search. As the author began indulging his request to search, Elkins said, “Well, it may not be in there. I’m not sure.”

In response to the author’s questions about the sermon from 1990, Elkins interjected that none of us were there to hear the sermon. He also said that he was opposed to elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation, but added that the two to three week opportunity that a congregation has to voice their Scriptural objections, before men are appointed to establish an eldership, was an “evaluation” and “criticism” from the members. Brother Elkins then asked what would be done if an elder committed murder or became a homosexual. His statements implied that the re-evaluation/re-affirmation processes perpetrated by the Brown Trail Church of Christ, in 1990 and 2002, were indeed Scriptural.

Brother Elkins said that Miller was opposed only after Dub McClish and Dave Watson “resigned” from *The Gospel Journal*. After that, “they” (MSOP, TGJ board, etc. J. R.) became “villains.” The author’s wife then said that Dave Miller’s errors were opposed long before brethren McClish and Watson were fired from the editorship of *The Gospel Journal*, even as early as 1990. Elkins responded saying, “Yes, and even I am on record of opposing it,” (Brother Elkins is on record opposing Dave Miller as early as May, 1990). Elkins also added that many of the men now opposing Miller have spoken on (past, J. R.) lectureships with him. He stated more than once that Watson and McClish were not fired but rather resigned. Brother Elkins added that he had spoken with brother Curtis Cates (president of *The Gospel Journal* board in 2005 and presently, J. R.) in Cates’ office before the board meeting, which would be held on July 20, 2005, in Schertz, Texas. He stated that he and brother Cates had prayed concerning the matter and that brother Cates had no intention of firing McClish and Watson. Elkins added that he had seen “a side

of Dave and Dub I never knew existed.”

Brother Elkins also mentioned David Brown and the fact that brother Brown has had to deal with fellowship errors (over the Miller issue, J. R.) within his own family, saying that he wouldn’t have anything to do with his daughter because of Dave Miller’s error and Elkins did not “see why he wouldn’t.” The author stated that such are indeed fellowship issues, however, Elkins disagreed.

The author was strongly urged during the course of the meeting to be merciful toward brother Miller considering the fact that we will all stand before judgment and only God truly knows the heart and if one has sincerely repented. The author was also asked why he would want to handle things the way others had and Elkins mentioned “causing discord.” The “others” mentioned in the preceding sentence refers to those who have actively opposed Dave Miller, such as : Dub McClish, David Brown, Dave Watson, and now this author. The implication of Elkins’ statement is that if one opposes Miller, Apologetics Press, MSOP, or those that support the same: you are “causing discord.” It must also be reported that during the meeting brother Elkins said that he had not called names nor did he have ill will toward any.

As the meeting drew to a close the author was reminded by brother Elkins of how MSOP had treated him and that he had been one of their best students. Elkins added further that the author and his hard work had been admired at school and that he seemed to be well thought of in the region where the author lived and preached. These statements are once more a plea to the emotions and not to the point at hand.

The above is a concise account of the author’s meeting with Garland Elkins. The remainder of this article will be devoted to answering Scripturally the erroneous statements and conclusions that brother Elkins made in the foregoing summary.

### Refutation of Brother Elkins’ Error

The author stated that he would examine the facts surrounding Dave Miller, Apologetics Press, TGJ, MSOP, and the list goes on. Elkins agreed that knowing the truth was of great importance. However, the truth carries with it a burden: *if the shoe fits you have to wear it!* The weight of evidence against brother Miller is staggering. Documentation includes: e-mails, phone conversations, audio recordings, a transcribed sermon, publicly released documents, mailed letters, open letters, published accounts in brotherhood papers, lectureship manuscripts and sermons, pulpit sermons, Bible classes, and tracts. It is certain that the author has failed to mention other ways that evidence has been documented and released, although the aforementioned list is enough to show the extent of proof that Dave Miller is a false teacher. “Yes, brother Elkins, the truth is important: but, can you bear it?”

Directly related to the weight of evidence against brother Miller and the lack of it to support him is the need, great need, of those that approve of Miller to keep in silence their position. Silence is indeed their friend because they cannot prove their stance Scripturally. They have pledged silence and draw others into this veil when possible. Brother Elkins so sought to bind the author by requesting that he sign a

statement of confidentiality. It is wrong for them to ask this of another and wrong for them to remain silent. They are violating Matt.18:15-17 and Jude 3. Brother Miller's error has been a public matter since April of 1990, if not before. This matter must be dealt with openly and publicly. *Silence is unacceptable.*

*As to the question of whether or not the men at MSOP are hypocrites, the Bible will provide the best answer.* Mark wrote the following, quoting the Lord, **“He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me”** (Mark 7:6). Jesus said that those who had pious lips but disobedient hearts were hypocrites. Brother Elkins has said publicly (the author heard him say this before his entire MSOP class in 2007) that he opposed elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation. Sadly he continues to fellowship Dave Miller and those that support him. A man's words are valuable if he acts according to his words; but if not, then his words are worthless and he is a hypocrite.

*The next issue is fellowshiping those in error.* This subject is handled at length in the concluding portion of this article. If one will examine 2 John 9-11 and Eph. 5:11, one must conclude, and correctly so, that those in error are in darkness and do not abide in God. Furthermore, if a faithful man fellowships those in error, he will become one who is in darkness and no longer abiding in God. This author will not jeopardize his soul with darkness, therefore, he will not fellowship those who have departed from wholly serving God.

*Attention should now be brought to the question of whether or not brother Miller's statement that Everett Chambers' marriage was illegal and unscriptural would constitute repentance on Miller's part.* Once more, the Bible will best answer this question. The Lord said this concerning repentance, **“But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went”** (Matt. 21:28-29). Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action. John the baptizer also spoke of repentance and reformation, **“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance”** (Matt. 3:8). One must also understand that sorrow toward God brought by the realization of sin in one's life, must precede repentance, **“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (2 Cor. 7:10). If one will recognize the teaching of Matt. 5:23-24 and 18:15-17, one must conclude that acknowledgment of sin to the one(s) damaged is a logical implication of the teaching of those verses. Therefore, if one is to bring forth **“fruits meet for repentance,”** one must confess his sin before God and before those against whom he has sinned. *This author would submit that Miller's profession of the illegal and unscriptural nature of Everett Chambers' marriage can in no way be construed as godly sorrow, repentance, nor reformation: neither does it bear any resemblance to same!* Where is brother Miller's admission of false teaching in his 2005 statement? Where is his sorrow? If the reader should

search, it shall be in vain, for it is not there. Those who say it is — *are wrong.* Brother Elkins asked, “What more do you want him to say?” The correct answer is: only what God would have him say....the confession of his error and asking for the forgiveness of the brotherhood and the forgiveness of God. God demands it and so do the faithful.

*Is one required to have personally witnessed an act of false teaching for one to refute it?* If that were true, then one could not refute the errors of John Calvin, Martin Luther, or John Wesley, to name but a few. One would have to be in the audience of the Pope to refute Catholic error, or Max Lucado to refute his error, or actually see and hear Rubel Shelly preach in order to refute his error. May the author state that the refutations of Calvinism, the Lutheran doctrine, and Methodist errors are standards at the Memphis School of Preaching. *Evidence is evidence and facts are facts.* The truth is what is necessary for refutation. A case in point: Paul refuted the error of the church at Corinth based upon the news brought to him by the house of Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11).

*The next point of error to examine is the erroneous idea that elder re-evaluation and re-affirmation is the same as the process of gathering Scriptural objections from a congregation prior to the appointment of men into an eldership.* Please notice how Dave Miller (in his April, 1990 sermon) compared their planned evaluation “process” and a two week period that was offered to submit Scriptural objections. He said:

Ultimately, out of that process then will come names who will be presented to the congregation on May 13th is the way that's set up at this time. And on that date then, when those names are presented to the congregation, a two-week period will be allowed for the submission of scriptural objections to the committee, which will be held in strictest confidence by that committee (Dave Miller, April 8, 1990, Brown Trail Church of Christ).

The “process” mentioned by brother Miller was the balanced re-evaluation process, which was to be completed before the “two week period” mentioned afterward. It is abundantly clear by Miller's own words that neither Miller, the committee, nor the elders at Brown Trail ever intended that their

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re-evaluation process should simply be a waiting time for the submitting of Scriptural objections by the congregation. No, the time afforded to a congregation to voice their Scriptural objections is NOT elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation.

*Any statement to the effect that there were no objections to Dave Miller and Brown Trail's use of elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation before the ousting of Dub McClish and Dave Watson from the editorship of The Gospel Journal, in 2005, is simply false.* Within the pages of the 1997 Bellview lectureship book is a manuscript by Dub McClish entitled "Reevaluation/ Reaffirmation of Elders?" Brother McClish names a number of brethren who were opposed to elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation, including Garland Elkins, before and up to, the then current date of 1997; that, was eight years before the change in the editorship of *The Gospel Journal*. In October, 2002, *The Gospel Journal*, featured an article by Marvin Weir entitled, "Change Agents and Leadership," which voiced strong opposition to Dave Miller's error. Even the pages of *The Gospel Journal* repudiated the false doctrine of elder re-evaluation/re-affirmation before 2005.

### July 20, 2005 Schertz, Texas TGJ Board Meeting

This author would now like to consider some facts relating to the meeting of the board of *The Gospel Journal*, in Schertz, Texas, on July 20, 2005. To verify the accuracy of this portion of the article, the author would refer the reader to the September, 2005, issue of *Contending for the Faith* and Dave Watson's summation dated, July 28, 2005. The board had met on the nineteenth and determined what they would say to McClish and Watson the next day. Therefore, what was recited by brother Michael Hatcher, from the screen of his laptop, at the opening of the meeting was indeed premeditated.

Please notice this quote from that aforementioned recitation,

The board has thoroughly discussed the situation (the AP scandal concerning Bert Thompson/Dave Miller and McClish's and Watson's refutation and dealing with that scandal – J. R.) and has unanimously determined that a change in the editorial staff may be necessary. Before making a final decision, we would like to hear any comments that either of you desires to make. It is not our intention to turn the meeting into a question and answer session (*CFTF*, September, 2005, p.17).

Now notice brother Hatcher's response.

"The 'spin' that the board put on this is just that — 'spin.' The fact is everyone knows that it is also. While we are stating publicly that there had not been a vote taken (there had not) thus no decision had been made (technically there had not), we all knew that there would need to be a change made regarding the editor and associate editor. The differing terms used ('fired,' 'dismissed,' 'accepted their resignation') all boil down to the same thing, and brethren know that. Dub (and David) were placed in a position in which they were forced to resign (if you don't believe that, ask either one of them)," (*CFTF*, September, 2005, p. 18).

Brother Watson wrote this account of the meeting shortly after it occurred.

The meeting began with brother Curtis Cates stating the ground rules. First, brother Cates stated that the meeting would not be a "question and answer" session. Both brother McClish and

brother Watson had a list of questions prepared to ask the Board but only managed to ask very few. Second, brother Cates stated that brother Michael Hatcher would be the only spokesman for the Board. Third, brother Cates then asked brother Hatcher to read a unanimous resolution the Board had made the day before. (Board members later stated that the board began meeting at 8:30 am on the previous day and 'agonized' all day to reach this resolution. Brother McClish requested a written copy of this resolution on July 21, but none has yet been given.) The resolution stated that by unanimous decision the Board believed it MAY (this word was emphasized) be necessary to make a change in the Editor and Associate Editor of TGJ. The reason given as to why a change of the Editor MAY be needed was because of brother McClish's AP 'Summation' e-mail. The reason given as to why a change of Associate Editor MAY be needed was because of brother Watson's e-mails to the Board members. Brother McClish later pointed out that if his name was an anathema to TGJ because of his 'Summation' e-mail then the names of brethren Curtis Cates and Joseph Meador on the "Statement of Support" for Apologetics Press with brother Dave Miller as Director should also be considered an anathema to TGJ. Since the Board's opposition to brother McClish revolved around the AP 'Summation,' he asked brother Cates if the Board believed he had sinned in writing it. Brother Cates assured brother McClish that they did not so believe, and that they had never discussed what he wrote in those terms. Brother Michael Hatcher then stated to brother McClish that it was not the 'rightness or wrongness' of what had been said or written but the 'perception' of it. At this point in the meeting brother McClish and brother Watson were told they could say anything they wanted. Since they saw the 'handwriting on the wall' brother McClish resigned as Editor of TGJ and brother Watson resigned as Associate Editor of TGJ. Not one of TGJ Board members made any attempt to talk either brother McClish or brother Watson out of resigning as they had done with brother Cates and brother Meador the week before. Not one of TGJ Board members offered any options to either brother McClish or brother Watson. Not one of TGJ Board members suggested that the resignations were premature or should be discussed further. Instead, brethren McClish and Watson were asked to leave the room while TGJ Board members met in closed session (Watson, July 28, 2005).

*If the board would only entertain "comments" and not questions from Watson and McClish, how could it be anything but a forced resignation? Some might ask if resignation really was demanded by the board? What else could the editors do when the board had made it clear that *The Gospel Journal* was (in their opinion) being destroyed (or put "in jeopardy," *CFTF*, Sept., 2005, p.17) by the actions of the editors. The only things that could have possibly saved the editors' jobs were full and complete apologies from the editors. Yes, apologies for refuting error and **"earnestly contending for the Faith,"** no less!*

*Brother Elkins sadly took the ad hominem approach by attacking David Brown's character.* His attack (subtle though it may have been) was a diversion. Please note the following from *Introductory Logic* by Douglas J. Wilson and James B. Nance, "Ad Hominem: Meaning 'to the man,' this is an extremely popular fallacy. It is committed whenever someone attacks the person, rather than his argument. It can follow this general form: X says p, and X is bad. So p must

be false,” (*Introductory Logic*, pp. 104-105). Dear reader this is a fundamental of basic logic and this is a fundamental fallacy. For anyone to make a statement such as: “David Brown says that Dave Miller is a false teacher, and David Brown is bad. Therefore, Dave Miller is not a false teacher,” is illogical and could never be used as sound argumentation. It is indeed very easy to turn and attack your opponent rather than offer logical proof for your statements. *This ad hominem approach has been used many times by those who support Dave Miller. When logic will not support you, all that is left to you are fallacies.*

Brother Elkins has been given more than ample time to respond to the author’s letter. He has chosen not to respond. Such is his prerogative. Verse three of the book of Jude commands that the faithful **“earnestly contend for the Faith.”** We are to fight for the Truth against all foes as often as there is a battle. There is no decommissioning for the soldier of Christ. The author must, therefore, ask why any faithful Christian would refuse to defend his position if it were supported by the Truth? *The answer is that it is not supported by the Truth and cannot stand up under scrutiny.* If not, why not? Silence is not a herald of righteousness. If Dave Miller and his supporters are in the right, then let them prove their position. Let it be proven by pen and by mouth. Let it be proven so conclusively that it is beyond any possibility of doubt. Let it be proven with such frequency that none could deny it. But, let there not be silence!

### **The Original Letter Sent by the Author to Garland Elkins August 2008**

Brother Elkins,

I have decided to write this letter to you, after having spoken with you on the twenty-second of July, 2008, because I did not defend my position as clearly as was needed nor do I think that I left a clear statement of my position with you when our conversation was ended. Please let me say clearly that I will not and cannot fellowship error (Eph. 5:11). Brother Miller is in error and shall remain in error until such time as he repents of his sinful teaching and practices. This is, as you know, a Biblical mandate with general application to all who violate God’s Law: one must repent to be forgiven (Luke 13:3,5; 17:3). The Bible also teaches that no faithful Christian can fellowship a false teacher (2 John 9-11), nor those that bid that same false teacher Godspeed (again Eph. 5:11). Dave Miller is a false teacher and although you once opposed his false teaching concerning elders, you and the Memphis School of Preaching now support him, though he has not repented. Therefore, I cannot, with God’s approval, fellowship you or any others that would support Dave Miller in his present condition.

I am bound by the Word of God to present the proof for my position (1 Peter 3:15, 1 Thess. 5:21). If I cannot prove my position, I must not hold it. The same rule applies to all Christians. Logic demands that only such conclusions as are supported by evidence should be drawn. To draw conclusions

that are not supported by proper evidence is to be irrational. God demands that we be rational (1 Thess. 5:21). When one has evidence, one must then draw his conclusions based upon that evidence and not on things which are no evidence at all. Proper logical conclusions will stand in the face of testing; illogical or irrational conclusions will not. Brother Elkins, I know that I am not telling you anything you do not already know. I feel certain that you understand the rules of logic, for such understanding is necessary for proper debating and refutation of error. If a man can prove his position by correctly using true logical processes, then he is right in his stance. If he cannot prove his position by said means, his position is false and must be relinquished.

Having stated the above I will now proceed to the proof. Please let me bring your attention to the tenth paragraph of brother Miller’s sermon. The last statement of that paragraph is as follows: “What follows then that [*sic.*] one of the qualifications of a shepherd is that the membership perceives him to be such, and is willing to submit, and to follow, to respect, and to trust.” Brother Miller offers this as the conclusion to his premises pronounced in this paragraph. This conclusion is false for it adds two qualifications to those listed by Paul as recorded in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. No man has the right to add to the Word of God (Rev. 22:18). Sound arguments must have true conclusions. Since this conclusion is not true, the argument cannot be sound. Please note these words from brother Thomas Warren: “To say that an argument is sound is to say both (1) that the argument is valid and (2) that all of the premises are true. If it is the case that either (1) the argument is not valid or (2) even one of the premises is not true, then the argument is not sound. And, it must be noted, only sound arguments prove their conclusions to be true,” (*Logic and the Bible*, pp. 10-11).

This statement directly relates to the basis for brother Miller’s doctrine of reevaluating/reconfirming elders. If one can “prove” that in order to be a qualified elder, that man must be “perceived” as an elder by the flock and that the flock must be willing to follow his leadership, then he has the necessary “proof” to justify elder reevaluation/reaffirmation. However, taking away the aforementioned “proof” will cause the false doctrine of elder r/r to topple. False “proof” is no proof at all; it produces erroneous rather than true conclusions. When one offers false evidence to prove his arguments, the rational thinker must reject his assertions. No one concerned with the truth can accept them. Brother Miller has offered false evidence to prove his arguments. Therefore, brother Miller’s arguments cannot be accepted and must be pronounced for what they are: false. Brother Miller taught false doctrine in the sermon he delivered at the Brown Trail Church of Christ in 1990. The faithful child of God must reject that teaching and not fellowship the false teacher (2 John 9-11). When one considers the law of implication one must realize that: “any doctrine which implies a false doctrine is itself false” (Warren, p. 25). Therefore, a false doctrine can only imply other false doctrines. The argument which brother Miller proposed in the tenth paragraph of his sermon in question has been proven to be false, and since it implies the doctrine of elder r/r, elder

r/r must be false.

Please note these further objections to brother Miller's sermon. The very first sentence of the sermon is as follows: "A statement was made by our elders several months ago concerning their determination to give this congregation an opportunity to make adjustments in the leadership of this church in the future." God has clearly determined the only way that a congregation can rightfully effect a change (removal because of sin or non-qualification) in an eldership: "**Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear**" (1 Tim. 5:19-20; also 1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4). Brother Miller says the same thing in one part of his sermon: "It therefore follows, that a man can be removed from the office of an elder. In fact, there we have the process of doing so." Brother Miller correctly said that 1 Tim. 5:19-20 (which he quoted/read just before the above quoted statement) was the process for the removal of apostate elders. However, brother Miller said in paragraph ten that the perception of a man to be an elder by the congregation was also a qualification. Such a statement is a contradiction of Biblical teaching on the matter as per the above cited verses and brother Miller's own statements; he has contradicted the Bible and himself.

Let it be further noted that the Biblical authority of elders has been violated. The first sentence of the sermon (as quoted above) speaks of this very thing. The eldership of the local congregation has the authority over that individual flock (Heb. 13:7,17). Inasmuch as God has decreed that they lead; they may not, with God's approval, leave that authority and responsibility to others. For the same reason, none may, with God's approval, take the authority and responsibility from those elders. The "membership at large (paragraph 7)" or the whole of a congregation never has the authority to make decisions. In every congregation the authority is given by God to the eldership (Heb. 13:7,17) or to the men (1 Tim. 2:12), if there is no eldership in place, never to the whole congregation. If an eldership has the authority over a congregation, and it does (Heb 13:7,17), then the appointment of additional elders or the removal of unqualified men must be decided by that eldership and not some other group of any sort. The Brown Trail congregation had five elders in place at the time of this sermon: "our five current elders" (paragraph 14). The only way that the eldership at Brown Trail would not have had the authority over that congregation is if four of the five elders had become unqualified, leaving only one man remaining as a faithful elder. In which case that one man could no longer

serve as an elder, but would become part of the leadership of the men of that congregation. Another possibility, of course, would be if all five of the elders became unqualified, then the outcome would be the same as the first explanation. There is no Biblical place for the doctrine taught by brother Miller in his sermon under consideration.

The above proofs are not all that could be levied against this sermon, but these are certainly enough. If a doctrine is false, one proof of that error is as conclusive as one hundred. Brother Miller publicly taught false doctrine, and he has not yet repented publicly of his sins. There are no words of repentance in his statement of 2005. Where are the words saying that what he taught was unscriptural and that he was in error for teaching such things? One cannot find them for they are not there. We are still waiting for such to be forthcoming. All that is expected of brother Miller is the same that would be expected of any other brother who had done the same. Error must not be condoned and certainly never encouraged.

Brother Elkins, both logic and Scripture prove that brother Miller has taught false doctrine and thus he has sinned. If you support him in his unrepentant state you are in violation of 2 John 9-11. All who support him in his present condition violate 2 John 9-11; and what is more, all who support him are party to his continuing in sin and thus contributing to the endangerment of brother Miller's soul. The Gospel calls upon you to repent, brother Elkins. It is my sincere prayer that you do.

A brother in Christ,  
/s/John Rose

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*"Haughty people seem to me to have like the dwarfs, the statures of a child and the face of a man." —Joubert*

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# A CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

Skip Francis

There is a crisis of leadership in the churches of Christ today. While much of this crisis might be blamed on elderships, it must be recognized that elders come from the general membership and must exhibit leadership qualities in order to be considered for the eldership in the first place. There is no question that the elderships of the past might bear at least a part of this burden. Were it not for such elderships, who forsook their responsibilities to guard and protect the flock of God (Acts 20:28), we would not have had to deal with the plethora of change agents that first began to spill their evil doctrines in the past century: men like W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett; and more recently Rubel Shelly, Lynn Anderson, Jeff Walling, and such like. Where were our elders then? Where was the leadership of sound men of the faith as these agents of change began to spread their faith shipwrecking doctrines “**like a canker**” (2 Tim. 2:17)? There is a crisis of leadership in the Lord’s church today when men fail to stand for the truth, especially when it means taking heat from friends, family members, and those associates that one has cherished over the years. There is no leadership when such men will not take a stand against an alma mater, publication, or congregation in which they have worshipped.

There is a crisis of leadership when the “para-church” organization becomes more important than the Truth of God’s Word or the church that Jesus bought with His own blood (Acts 20:28). When such modern organizations as Freed-Hardeman University, Memphis School of Preaching, Online Academy of Biblical Studies, Polishing the Pulpit, Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes, Apologetics Press, The Gospel Broadcast Network, and many others, have become more important than a stand for the Truth and maintaining one’s proper fellowship *ONLY* with those who continue to “**walk in the light**” (1 John 1:7), we are certainly in a crisis situation.

True leadership begins with one being willing to lead. A true leader is one who is willing to go against the flow of popular opinion and stand out in the crowd. A “go along, get along” mentality is NOT the trait of a good leader. One of

the most dangerous jobs for a soldier in combat is to “walk point.” This involves going ahead of the platoon and looking for possible booby traps and snipers. Those who were used in this position had a much higher mortality rate because they were usually the first to come under fire, and there was always a percentage of booby traps they did not see in time. A true leader is one who is willing to “walk point.” This is what prompted the prophet Ezekiel by Divine inspiration to write, “**And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none**” (Ezekiel 22:30). The person who will “**stand in the gap**” is the one who is willing to put himself into a position where he may be the brunt of criticism, not once but many times over. I recall having heard about the stand for the truth made by one preacher with the following statement: “He will jump on the bandwagon after the wagon is full.” We have many such preachers today, who will only get involved in taking a stand after they have put their finger in the wind to see which direction it is blowing, and only after many others have taken the lead in doing so. *Where are our leaders?*

In most lessons I have heard over the years on the subject of elders it is their qualifications that are under consideration. Though it is definitely needed and right to discuss the qualifications of elders, and elders DO need to meet these qualifications, the *WORK* of elders needs far greater attention than it currently receives. In fact, is that not what is under consideration when we examine the first and primary qualification of an elder; the desire to be involved in a good work? Paul, in discussing this issue with young Timothy, put it in this fashion: “**This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work**” (1Tim. 3:1). How can a man desire a work if he knows little of what that work involves? Further, how can a man truly “desire” a work if he is unwilling to actually *DO* that work?

I was baptized into Christ in the latter part of 1972 and, since that time, I have experienced a variety of different

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elderships; different in personality, different in methodology, different in style but none of these things would, in any ordinary sense, automatically disqualify an eldership. On the other hand, I have also experienced, or heard of, elderships that differ greatly in their effectiveness as elders. I have seen elderships that were poor, mediocre, fair, and good. In each case there are reasons why they fit into the category that I have assigned to each one. In some cases the obvious reason they are sub-standard is because some of the elders, if not all, were not qualified for the office to which they have attained. In other cases it was a distinct lack of understanding of what the work of an elder is and their own ability to do it. When men are unqualified for the eldership, either by reason of basic qualifications, or a lack of ability to do the work, they need to either step up or step down. As the old adage goes: "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen!"

When we examine the qualifications for elders given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, as well as in Titus 1:5-9, we should be able to understand exactly why these men *must* meet these qualifications: they fit the very work that they are to do. Had all elders actually met these standards, the church might not be in the mess it is in today.

**1 Timothy 3:1-7 — This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

As we examine each of these qualifications, we should be able to see how they fit in to the work of an elder/bishop. An elder, especially in his role of shepherd, must be vigilant, sober, able to feed (teach), given to hospitality (to know his flock), he must be "**blameless**" that he will be an adequate leader, and he must be patient. We should also be able to see the need for the negative qualifications as well. An elder who is a striker or brawler will not be vigilant. An elder who is given to wine will not be sober. An elder who is greedy or covetous will act as a hireling and not a shepherd. Similarly, an elder cannot oversee a household if he cannot care for his own. A "**novice**," almost by definition, cannot be an "elder," since the elder is assumed to be spiritually mature. In all too many elderships, there are men serving in the office of a bishop that have hardly a gray hair. This is in part because some assume that a person can be an "elder in training." This is a basic failure on the part of elderships since the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are not "ideal" qualifications but basic ones. It is rather like someone applying for a job and submitting a resume that does not fulfill the basic hiring premises that were advertised. Such resumes most often end up in the "round file." Similar qualifications are given in Titus

chapter 1, but we will focus on only a part in this article.

**Titus 1:9-11—Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.**

If men had truly met these qualifications, the Rubel Shelly/Max Lucado crisis would have been nipped in the bud when it first began. Instead, it was allowed to play out because spineless men in the eldership were unable or unwilling to stop the mouths of these gainsayers (Tit. 1:11) — because of the popularity of the men involved. Is this not the very thing that Paul was referring to when he said that these vain talkers "**subvert whole houses?**"

If men had truly met the qualifications of elders, would the current division that exists in the church over the teaching and practice of the elder re-evaluation and reaffirmation (elder r/r) doctrine ever have occurred? Unqualified men would never have been put into the eldership, and/or would have been scripturally removed without the need to put anything to a public vote. Rather than deal scripturally with an unqualified eldership (1 Tim. 5:19-20), the eldership at Brown Trail Church of Christ, and a number of other congregations before and since, decided to practice that for which there is no scriptural authority and put the eldership, albeit temporarily, in subjection to the membership. Rather than being true shepherds of the flock, these elders handed over their flock to the wolves in sheep's clothing. No matter what the outcome may have been, this is still the reality of what they did at the time. It was a cowardly way to go about dealing with unqualified elders.

What does the work of an elder involve? In order to exhort and convict the gainsayer, first and foremost, one must have backbone. The spineless and cowardly need not apply! As Jess Whitlock put well in his manuscript for the 2008 Bellview Lectures, using a term from the fast food industry — "boneless chicken," he implied that there are many elders and preachers today that are "lacking in backbone" and cowardly. Anyone unwilling or unable to make scriptural decisions and then stick to these decisions has no business in the eldership in the first place. Further, when elders become unable to do such work, because of age, infirmity, or by reason of poor temperament, they need to withdraw from the eldership.

In order to use sound doctrine, one must first have a knowledge of what sound doctrine is. This involves an elder's own need to insure that he is not only involved in daily Bible study, but also staying informed about things going on in the local congregation and the brotherhood at large. This was Paul's first basic instruction to the Ephesian elders when he met with them while on the road to Jerusalem in Acts chapter 20. In verse 28, he begins by instructing them to "**take heed to yourselves.**" This involved some introspection and proactive involvement. The elder must be certain that he is

knowledgeable of the Scriptures and of their application to the issues at hand. In order to stop the mouths and prevent the subversion of whole houses, an elder must have the right kind of conviction toward the betterment of the entire congregation, not just in the here and now but in eternity. I have seen this applied in several different ways, and each one manifests itself in a category of elders.

The poor elder simply will not stand up to the gainsayer no matter what. One eldership I worked both with and for saw me as simply a hireling and not as a true member of the congregation. I was told by these “elders” that they were unwilling to lose even one member over the preacher. What was truly sad about this situation was that this included those who seldom darkened the door of the church house at all! I was only at this congregation for 5 months, start to finish, yet there were those who attended less than half dozen times that were allowed an input into my work there. This was just the tip of the iceberg. Though the elders were fine with doing the work of deacons (i.e., one elder was also the treasurer), when it came to anything of spiritual importance they would call a congregational meeting. I will point out here that I DID say “congregational” and not just a “men’s meeting.” Women and children were present at these meetings and every member was allowed an input AND a vote. Shortly before my departure, the elders put out a congregational survey that was ostensibly to take the pulse of the congregation on several issues. At least this is what I had been told it was to be. Instead it was filled with questions about me and my work with that church (remember I had only been there 5 months—one month of which the church building could not even be accessed due to bad weather). This was not the only time that an “elder” or even an “eldership” lied to me or about me. It seems that the former preacher had taught little but “feel good” sermons, had worn an earring, preached in casual attire, and had been in the habit of not giving invitations at the close of his sermons. He had, ostensibly, scratched their ears with that which was not sound doctrine. The survey that was handed out was given to every “perceived” member, even those who had not been baptized into Christ (I had already run into this problem with at least one member there and was told about the matter by others). Teens, women, and unfaithful members were allowed to participate. The results of this survey were varied, but it was plain that more than one person was not happy with my preaching. This was summed up by one person who complained because I had put too much Scripture into my sermons! I left after the elders took a group to the Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop.

A mediocre eldership is one that will try to accommodate a gainsayer while also attempting to keep a sound preacher. They may, at times, try to defend the preacher by explaining away something that he has preached, or even give a tacit defense of him from time to time. Just as often they will try to agree with the naysayer with comments like, “Yes, I know, the preacher is a little harsh at times.” They will often try to sweep under the rug various complaints, or simply try to

ignore them and hope they go away. Often such elders will simply try to appease the vain talker by telling them they will “speak to” the preacher about it, but then say nothing to him about it at all. They will also try to back peddle on decisions they have made at the first sign of any resistance from the membership. They will express their concerns over the loss of some members (even when such losses are inevitable when the Truth is preached), and put such numbers on a higher level of importance than the soundness of the flock that remains. In fact, in my experience, there are often far more losses when a sound man leaves a congregation than ever occurred while he was preaching for it. Such elders are trying to be politicians and are concerned about being popular, so much so that they are willing, ultimately, to sacrifice the preacher to the wolves at the first opportunity. As one preacher wrote elder must, oversee “all the flock, all the time.” This includes wayward and gainsaying family members and friends. By sad experience I have concluded that more damage has been done in local congregations by family members of elders than any other single group. In fact, this can be narrowed down even further. As many of my preaching brethren will attest, an unruly elders wife can do considerable damage to the local church over the years, especially when the elder will not take his obligation to “**ruleth well his own house**” (1Tim.3:4) seriously. Rather than stop the mouths of the gainsayers and vain talkers, who may or may not be a part of their own family, a mediocre elder will allow an “undercurrent” to continue in the church until there is, ultimately, a blowup of some kind. Such will often be blamed on the preacher and, once again, the cowardly, mediocre elder will simply ask the preacher to move on.

A fair eldership is one that does the work of an elder in most things, though they are often lax in getting work that

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needs to be done accomplished in a timely way. Such a man may be a good “firemen”, in that he deals with situations when they arise, but he is not proactive in keeping the wolves at the door. They might allow the gainsayer a place in the flock with all good intentions, perhaps hoping that these vain talkers will learn better through sound teaching from a sound preacher of the gospel. Though such is indeed laudable, it is a sort of “buyers beware” situation. I have seen situations that float from congregation to congregation carried from one to the other by disgruntled members. They are not with a church long before they begin to go down their list of complaints, and they are almost the same complaints they have routinely voiced in the other churches where they have been members. They are not always obvious in what they are doing so they can spread their vitriol around quite a bit before it becomes evident that there is a problem. Like the gainsayer, they can subvert quite a few households before the damage is obvious to the eldership. This is why it is incumbent on elderships to truly know each member under their oversight. It is no accident that Jesus and His divinely inspired apostles and prophets referred to this relationship in a shepherd/flock analogy. The shepherd lived with the flock in Bible times, so that the flock became fully familiar with him and he with them. *When someone shows up at the door, a proactive eldership will find out who they are before they are simply added to the rolls of the church.* Why are they in the local area? What congregation did they come from? Did they leave another congregation in the area, and, if so, why? Have they ever been under church discipline at a former congregation? Further, such elderships need to have established policies and procedures in order to insure that all the flock are aware of congregational standards. Such areas as rules of appropriate dress, acceptable Bible versions for public use, use of the building and grounds, and the like, need to be established and adhered to. In addition, elderships should have established guidelines for how to deal with various obvious church problems, such as: what form of discipline is appropriate in certain cases where such is needed. How many “unexcused absences” from a member will be considered grounds for what form of discipline? How long will the eldership wait before further action is taken? Further, elderships should not operate as a type of “star chamber.” Their actions should be transparent to the membership. This is not to say that there may be some actions taken by the elders that will kept private, but overall the elders should do nothing that they are ashamed to put forward to those they oversee.

Good elderships seem to be few and far between these days. Though I have not worked with any that I can safely say fall into this category, I have heard of the methods of a few that puts them into this category. A good eldership will not allow the gainsayer to get a foothold in the local church.

**Acts 20:28-31—Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men**

**arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.**

When someone new shows up, they are warmly welcomed, hopefully by the eldership. It is the eldership that has all the initial contact with them. At some point the elders will sit down with one another and discuss their observations about the new person and then will ask to meet with them to find out a little about who these new faces are. Any questions that have arisen as a result of observation, along with the ones mentioned above, should be asked at that time. These are but a few simple steps that a good eldership will do with any new face that shows up at their church building. They will also keep an eye on these new sheep over time so that their understanding of who these brethren are can be expanded. Contrary to what some may think, this is not necessarily being “suspicious.” It has, as its ultimate goal, the need for the shepherd to know the flock. In addition, since men will arise *from* the flock as well, a good eldership will be plain in their speaking with their existing membership. When difficult issues are addressed from the pulpit, it should be the result of recognition by the elders that such issues need to be addressed. The elders should then follow the preacher into the pulpit and make it plain that the things that were addressed are also the policy of the eldership and any deviation will not be tolerated. I heard of one “good” eldership who made it plain that the door of the church building was made, by design, to “swing both ways,” thus implying that those who disagreed with the contents of a scriptural sermon could take their complaints elsewhere.

Gainsayers, vain talkers, and those who would deceive, will often manifest themselves by demanding the firing or resignation of the preacher, and will then hold their membership at the local church “hostage” by ransoming their personal attendance as the cost of keeping the preacher. Any eldership that would kowtow to such behavior by any member is mediocre at best.

**1 Peter 5:1-4—The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.**

The work of an elder requires that oversight be taken. It is wrong to say that an elder has oversight over spiritual matters and deacons have the oversight of the physical items. The elders oversee all the church all the time. One translation of the Greek word “*episkopeo*” is that of “look diligently,” thus this oversight cannot be passive. In fact, it is a present active participle, thus the diligence involved. This is a work that must be done willingly. I have heard of elderships where some are only elders because there was no one else to take the job. This violates not only the “desire” requirement, but

also the “**constraint**” one. An elder should be one because he desires so to be, and not because he was coerced or forced into it. An elder who no longer can do the work of an elder should not be “constrained” to remain an elder merely because he feels that he had no choice in the matter. Better the turmoil that sometimes results from having to resort to men’s meetings than to have an unqualified eldership overseeing the Lord’s flock.

An elder must also have a ready mind. This demonstrates the idea of being “proactive”. He must not “**lord it over**” the flock. In other words, it is *NOT* a position of abject authority to uplift the ego of the individual. Instead, the elder is far more the steward of God’s gifts. This is not to say that he has no authority, but rather the opposite: *that he must exercise the authority given him by God and must use THAT authority and not his own.* The very problem with the elder r/r issue was the notion that the elders could do something for which they had not been given any authority.

We do have a crisis of leadership in the church. Unfortunately, leaders are not born, they are trained. Such training should begin at the earliest stages of life. As soon as young people are old enough to begin to receive Bible instruction, such instruction should include their own involvement in the work of the church and how they should be leaders as well. Elders, deacons, preachers, Bible class teachers, elders and deacons wives, and faithful members are all “**taught of God**” in order to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to

Godly service. Such training does not require a para-church agency. In fact, the most effective training is always done in the local church. In times past young men were trained to leadership positions through “Timothy classes” or “preacher boy training”. This was always done in the local congregation.

What do we do now? Let us begin to teach men why they should be willing to attain to a leadership role in the Lord’s church and then provide them all the instruction they need in order to qualify for such. If it was possible to do so in the first century, under the Roman Empire, it certainly is possible today. Furthermore, such men attained to the eldership in just three years. Acts 14:23— “**And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.**” Such ordaining of elders was done a mere three years after the founding of these churches. This demonstrates that good, sound leadership is possible even in a relatively short period of time, if the proper instruction is given. The key to bringing this about is EFFORT. There must be first a recognition of the crisis that we are in, and then an effort to resolve it.

Have no doubt, the church is in a leadership **CRISIS!** There is hope, however, if **WE** make the effort.

—1334 Carpenter Dr.  
Liberal, KS 67901



## ELDERS: Who Are These Men?

### *Their Work In Practical Terms (3)*

*“...take care of the church of God...” (1 Tim. 3:5)*

The Late W. N. “Bill” Jackson

*“...a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God ...”  
(Titus 1:7)*

In the first installment in this series of articles we noted the New Testament words used for elders, and saw the work in terms of the definitions of those words. These definitions pointed to the work in the broader sense than that which we now will give. Our headings will be those taken from the items found in the word definitions, and will lead us then to see the varied activities involved in the work of elders. Naturally, there is some overlapping.

We suggest these:

#### 1. OVERSEEING THE FLOCK OF GOD

The Holy Spirit has given them this work (Acts 20:28), and since the flock is formed into a congregation, with service, living, worship and daily activities, elders indeed have tremendous responsibilities in “**taking care of the church of God**” (1 Tim. 3: 5). We may lay aside the old saying, since it is error, that “*the elders oversee the spiritual matters, and the deacons oversee the material*

*things.*” “The deacons are not overseers; the elders are the overseers—seeing over the flock, and seeing over the work and worship of the flock. The elders oversee ALL of it. Here are at least some of the items with which elders must be concerned and involved if they are to truly be shepherds.

**(a) Planning and implementing the congregation’s work.** In the broadest terms, the church has work to do in the areas of evangelism, edification and benevolence. The work should be planned, and not haphazard. “**Not slothful in business**” (Rom. 12: 11) should be true, of all places, in the Kingdom of God. The work planned should be full enough to challenge the talents, abilities and resources of the congregation, and to cause them to stretch forth to attain.

**(b) Planning and distributing the financial resources of the congregation.** Giving is a part of

New Testament worship (1 Cor. 16:2), and thereby the congregation's operating expenses are obtained. The planning done by the elders must take into consideration the giving the congregation will be asked to do, and once more, the planning should be such as to be challenging. We would recommend that a budget be set, and that it be a goal that will encourage the congregation's enthusiastic efforts.

## 2. FEEDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

This charge is given both in Acts 20:28 and in 1 Peter 5:2. Here the American Standard Version, 1 Peter 5:2, has *tend the flock*, and we get the picture of the shepherd's care. Just now, we want to focus on *feeding* and then will have another section dealing with some other work of *pastoring* the flock. With this charge given to the elders, we know that beyond the personal responsibility any teacher or preacher has, before God, as to how he has handled the truth, the elders are also responsible for the teaching that is done. We list some matters with which elders must be concerned:

**(a) Know the Word of God themselves.** Indeed, "*take heed unto yourselves,*" (Acts 20:28) in all things, but most certainly those who serve as elders should labor to become the very best of Bible students. The charge is that they be able to use the Word in exhorting saints and convicting those in error. If they are not knowledgeable as to the Scriptures, they will not be able to do so, and neither will they be able to faithfully comply with these next points.

**(b) Knowing the teachers.** Every prospective teacher should be asked to fill out a questionnaire, covering both points of life and character (as to smoking, drinking, dancing) and personal life (marital status, and as pertains to God's marriage law), and as to convictions on matters troubling the cause of the Lord (the marriage question, cultism, authority of elders, etc.). Do not use a doubtful teacher, and elders should not hesitate in removing a teacher (or preacher) who is blemished in character or untrue to the Word.

**(c) Knowing what is being taught.** A planned curriculum wherein the entire Bible is covered in all classes and over a designated period of time is most excellent. That is the planning of it, but in the following of the curriculum, the elders still must know who is teaching, and what is being taught. Examining prepared class material, visiting the classes, periodic meetings with teachers to see where all stand in the schedule, etc., are some devices the elders may use. The souls of the elders are in jeopardy if they, charged with feeding the flock, know nothing of the feeding being done!

As a part of that knowing what is being taught, there must be the proper and faithful teaching from the pulpit. We will say more of this in a later chapter, but for now let us emphasize that the elders have the responsibility for the pulpit teaching as well. If such teaching is not in accord with truth, then the elders are the men to effect the needed changes.

## 3. WATCHING OVER SOULS.

Hebrews 13:17, in charging the saints to be obedient to, and submit to, the rule of elders, points out that they "**watch for your souls**" and will give an accounting thereof. The picture, in the definition of the word "*watch,*" is most apt: "*To be sleepless, to lie awake (through care and anxiety), to be watchful of or very intent upon a thing.*" This, in and of itself, and if we had no other verses to speak of the awesome responsibility elders have, should greatly impress us. We had earlier mentioned that one who serves as an elder must be about all that all other Christians do, but has then these added responsibilities. The faithful elder will not have much free time.

We are, for purposes of this study, separating *watching over souls* from the more precise *protecting the flock*, and will deal with the latter in our next section. Now, what are some matters involved in the *watching over souls*?

**(a) Knowing the members.** That is especially challenging in a large congregation. A beginning can be made in visiting with them as they come in obedience to the gospel, or when they place membership. Indeed, we recommend some type of meeting with each new member, to acquaint them with the elders, but also with the various aspects of the work. The knowing of the members can be expedited in a schedule of visitation that the elders can arrange. That feeling of *oneness in the work of God* can be expedited in the elders being present early enough, and remaining late enough, at the services to greet and visit with both members and visitors.

**(b) Meeting the needs of members.** Just here, we have in mind such things as, beyond the normal visiting for acquaintance and fellowship, visiting in times of sickness, bereavement or when some other matter renders the person or family in need of comfort. We have long since trained our preachers to be attentive to members in this regard, and indeed, one who preaches should be so doing as a matter of Christian duty, first and foremost.

There still remains, however, the elders as those who have care for these souls, and who, as shepherds, should be concerned when the sheep are disturbed or hurt. It is a beautiful thing to see elders truly at work, day by day, in seeing to the needs of members. If the elders have their own secular work occupying their time during the working hours, then much of this will fall to their noon or dinner hours, or in the evenings. Remember, the *watching* referred to a position of losing some sleep. Faithful elders need not be reminded on this point, to be sure.

**(c) Being available to the members.** Some of this is done if the elders are early to the services, and remain available to the members when services are dismissed. Then, at their normal meeting times, members should know that the elders are available to have discussion with them, and that they would be happy to arrange such. This can be made known in regular announcements of upcoming meetings, and with the urging that "*should you desire to discuss any matter with the elders, please see*

*one of us.* Making periodic announcements is a good thing, for members need to know that their shepherds are interested enough, concerned enough, and spiritual enough to meet and further the work of God and the watch-care for their souls.

**(d) Letting the members hear from them.** A well-informed membership is a happier membership, and considering what is said about both members and elders in the New Testament, surely there are occasions when the elders need to speak to the congregation. Yea, sometimes to rebuke. but also to exhort (Titus 1 :9). It is some of the best of all insurance to keep the members informed, and encouraged, and to give them a sense of being co-workers with the elders in both the concerns and labors of the congregation. It is believed that a faithful congregation will want to hear from its elders now and again, and that a faithful eldership will want to speak to the flock with some frequency.

**(e) Meeting disciplinary needs.** A disciple is a *'disciplined one,'* and, most certainly, in a God-approved work, discipline is an ongoing matter, and we have a further chapter along these lines. Just here we refer to that visiting and counseling done by elders in their seeking to restore the erring (Gal. 6:1), and convicting the gainsaying man (Titus 1:9). There are the absentees (Heb. 10:25), the unruly (1 Thess. 5:14), the weak (1 Thess. 5:14), the sowers of discord (Rom. 16:17), the false teachers (Rom. 16:17), the immoral (1 Cor. 5), those out-of-step (2 Thess. 3:6, 14), with every shade and tint of worldliness, carelessness and indifference. Find the elder with *'no visiting to do'* in his charge to watch over souls, and you have found a BLIND elder, spiritually speaking. In *taking care of the church* of God (1 Tim. 3:5) the true elder will never be, and can never be, idle!

#### 4. PROTECTING THE FLOCK

We especially wanted to separate this emphasis, simply because such is so urgently needed in our time. It would a time of actual, or impending, apostasy. In the first century, times of apostasy were pointed to (1 Tim. 4: 1-3; 2 Tim. 4:1-4) with frequency. The church had hardly been in existence for a generation when Paul declared **"the mystery of iniquity doth already work"** (2 Thess. 2: 7), and he gave warning to elders that sometimes apostasy would arise from their own ranks (Acts 20:29-30). How urgent is the need that elders be watchful and protective, and they must equip themselves to be good shepherds along these lines!

As this is written, we have in mind some current problems now hurting the Kingdom of God, with the promise that much more hurt will come, and for who knows how long! We mention these:

- (1) The move toward union with the Independent Christian Church, to lose ourselves in denominationalism;
- (2) The move to make the use of the mechanical instrument in worship a matter of judgment, with freedom to use such on the part of those thus disposed;
- (3) The teaching that elders have no authority;
- (4) The perversion of God's marriage law, amounting

to a giving of blessing to adultery;

(5) The cultic influence in the church, whether called Crossroadism or The Boston Movement;

(6) The pressing of freedom to use every possible ungodly and wild volume called a *translation* in the worship services;

(7) The move to give women a work in the Kingdom wherein they will usurp the place given the man; and

(8) The work of current *scholars* in the stress for a *new hermeneutic* wherein every Biblical point is a *matter of interpretation* and no one can ever insist on any point being the firm and fixed law of God. This list is not exhaustive, but it should be enough to alarm us, and elders especially should be so greatly concerned. Every one of these, and many not mentioned, is a threat to the very souls they are to guard and protect!

#### ELDERS PROTECTING THE FLOCK

What are some moves the elders can make to aid in the charge to protect the flock? We suggest these, with some emphasis already given, but worthy of being repeated here:

**(a) Know the Word of God.** Again, the elders, should have the skill to convict the gainsayer (Titus 1 :9). Without a knowledge of the Word, an elder will not recognize existing errors, or if such was identified as error, he would not know how to use the truth against it!

**(b) Be serious about the eldership and the flock of God.** If one does not love the church, the Kingdom (Matt. 6:33), and if one does not care about the seriousness of his responsibility before God as an elder (Heb. 13: 17), dangers to the kingdom and to the souls of men will not even register with him.

**(c) Be informed.** It is sad but true that some elders do not even read the periodicals that will inform them of dangers to the Kingdom. Too many have said, in their ignorance of both the existing problems and those in their charge, *"We don't have that problem here,"* and may find out tomorrow that they have had it for some time! It is ridiculous to think, in our time of communication and rapid dispensing of information good and bad, that such-and-such error exists *in the brotherhood* but we will *"never have it here."* The next person to place membership may well bring it with him! Elders should attend faithful lectureships wherein these errors and false teachers are identified and exposed, and if they cannot be in attendance, they should obtain for their own libraries those volumes and study them carefully!

It is alarming to think that elders in the Kingdom, who would not be complacent if an economic crisis threatened their own savings in the local bank, or who would not sit idly by and say, *"It won't touch my family,"* if a fearful epidemic was moving across the land, will chalk up all current problems to *preachers being alarmists* and not move out to protect the flock. They should be giving their preachers encouragement in using their work to help enlighten the brethren!

*Contending For The Faith*  
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### -Alabama-

**Holly Pond**—Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

### -England-

**Cambridgeshire**—Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); [www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org](http://www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org). Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or [KeithSisman.net](http://KeithSisman.net). Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; [www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org](http://www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org) and [www.Myth-and-Mystery.org](http://www.Myth-and-Mystery.org).

### -Florida-

**Ocoee**—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, [ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com](mailto:ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com), [www.ocoeeccoc.org](http://www.ocoeeccoc.org).

**Pensacola**—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

### -North Carolina-

**Rocky Mount**—Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

### -Oklahoma-

**Porum**— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: [lawson@starnetok.net](mailto:lawson@starnetok.net).

### - Tennessee-

**Murfreesboro**—Church of Christ, 837 Esther Lane, Murfreesboro, TN, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at [www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org](http://www.murfreesborochurchofchrist.org). evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

### -Texas-

**Denton area**—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: [northpointcoc@hotmail.com](mailto:northpointcoc@hotmail.com). Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; [gmail.com](mailto:gmail.com).

**Houston area**—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. [www.churchesofchrist.com](http://www.churchesofchrist.com).

**Hubbard**—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; [DJGoines@Valornet.com](mailto:DJGoines@Valornet.com).

**Huntsville**—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

**New Braunfels**—225 Saenger Halle Rd. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. [www.nbchurchofchrist.com](http://www.nbchurchofchrist.com).

**Richwood**—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

### -Wyoming-

**Cheyenne**—High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 514-3394, evangelist: Roelf L. Ruffner

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