

Appointing Elders and Deacons

by Bryan Gibson

Appointing elders and deacons in a local church can sometimes be a painful process. It doesn't have to be, but when people don't behave the way they should, it can make life miserable for everyone. Let's put YOU in the middle of certain scenarios that could develop and then discuss how best to handle them—according to the Scriptures.

You have the desire to become an elder or deacon, but your motive is self-promotion. You can't serve, because you don't love. Read 1 Corinthians 13 again, especially where it says "love...does not parade itself...does not seek its own..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Please remove your name immediately from consideration, because you're not the kind of servant the Lord seeks (Mark 10:43-45). Hopefully, your brethren will see this ego problem ahead of time and not submit your name in the first place.

Your name is put forward for consideration, either as an elder or a deacon, and someone approaches you with a question about your qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Perhaps they have a very specific objection. Be careful, here, because this test will reveal a lot about you. Remember, "love suffers long and is kind...is not puffed up; does not behave rudely..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). If you get mad with them, then you weren't qualified in the first place. And don't say, "If it's a matter of sin, they should have come to me sooner." Perhaps they should have, but that is not the key issue here. If their objection is valid, humbly admit it; if it's not valid, patiently explain to them wherein you think they are wrong.

You have the desire to become an elder or deacon, and for whatever reason you weren't appointed this time. First, make sure you don't have any ill feelings toward those who were appointed—"love...does not envy..." (1 Corinthians 13:4). Secondly, don't let this get you down, especially to the point that it affects your faithfulness to the Lord. Think about all the ways in which you can still serve—teaching, giving, visiting, even helping the elders watch for souls (Hebrews 13:17). The Lord rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), regardless of whether they ever serve as elders or deacons. If you react badly to not being appointed, it may mean that you sought it for the wrong reason anyway.

You really wanted a certain person to be appointed, but because a number of people raised objections, he wasn't appointed. Please don't rail against your brethren, because "love...believes all things..." (1 Corinthians 13:7). In other words, don't immediately assume that your brethren "had it in" for your favorite candidate. It may just be that they saw some things that you were unable to see. And whatever you do, don't be guilty of any "behind the scenes" actions where you try to coerce brethren into giving up their objections. Conversations between brethren can be fruitful; just be sure that both your motives and your tactics are pleasing to God.