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CrossRoads Baptist Church
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Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3: 1-13
Church Series #5

"The Church Is Built on Leadership: Elders/Deacons"

I heard Warren Wiersbe teach on I Thessalonians this week and he said, "..the local church is the most important agency in God's program today." That's a good word as we continue to talk about the church.

I. Biblical Definition of Elders/Deacons

1. Elders, Pastors, Bishops and Overseers are all synonymous
2. Elders are basically to govern (I Tim. 5:17 "Let the elders who rule well...." , teach (I Tim 5:17 "...labor in preaching and teaching.") and protect and guide the flock (I Peter 5:2 "Tend the flock of God."and Acts 20:29 "wolves will come in")
3. Most all references to elders in the NT are plural.

* Acts 14:23 "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church"
* Acts 20: 17 at Ephesus, he called "the elders of the church"
* Titus 1:5 "appoint elders in every town"
* James 5: 14 "call the elders of the church"

It seems that James was directed as pastor at Jerusalem (Acts 12:17 and Gal 2:12) or he may have been "first among equals."

3. Deacons are servants who give financial oversight (I Tim 3 - "not greedy for gain") preserve the unity of the body (Acts 6 and wives are not to be slanders) and serve as needed (diakonos = servant).

4. Women deacons? Romans 16:1 Phoebe is called a "deaconess" but there is no evidence there was an official office of deaconess.

II.Difference between Elders and Deacons

The major difference in the listing of qualifications in I Tim 3 is elders must "able to teach" (verse 2). Deacons have no such qualification which lends that elders serve more of the spiritual oversight of the congregation while deacons don't.

III. Similarities between Elders and Deacons

1. They both served the local church. Phil 1: 1 "...with the bishops and deacons."
2. They both have similar character qualities. Note the character traits and patterns of godly living - rather than worldly achievement, fame or success.
3. They both serve for the sake of the Lord and His church. They don't serve for themselves; they don't "represent" different areas of the church.

IV. Notes for Leaders and the Church

1. Pray for your church leadership to remain Biblically qualified to serve.
2. Pray for God to raise up men to serve as pastors and deacons.
3. Pray for men to be willing to serve (I Tim. 3:1)
4. Pray for the unity of spirit among leadership. Spiritual leadership is shared leadership. "Authority without accountability is dictatorship"
5. Unity among the leadership means great blessings for the church (Psalm 133) "There the Lord commanded the blessing."