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Recognizing God's Leaders: An Ordination Service

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ORDER OF SERVICE
Hillcrest Church of Christ
February 25, 1990
ORDINATION OF ELDERS

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

SONGS:

"The Church's One Foundation"—517

"I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord"—224

PRAYER

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIVE READING

(See below)

SERMON

INVITATION:

"Sweetly, Lord, Have We Heard
Thee Calling"—113

CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION AND
NEW ELDERS (see below)

LAYING ON OF HANDS

PRAYER

RESPONSE FROM NEW ELDERS

SONG:

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds"—46

PRAYER

So very often we go about the business of "church work" without stopping to realize and honor the God who is creating our life together. If God is at work in his church, what better time to recognize this than in the ordination of elder. To do this bestows a sense of God's full participation in congregational decision making and imparts a blessing on those who participate. This service provides a good example of such an attempt to recognize God while recognizing leaders. This service comes to us via Everett Ferguson, an elder for the Hillcrest Church in Abilene.

Responsive Reading

Leader: Here is a trustworthy saying:

CONGREGATION: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

Leader: Now the overseer must be above reproach.

CONGREGATION: The husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Leader: not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

CONGREGATION: He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

Leader: (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

CONGREGATION: He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

Leader: He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace into the devil's trap.

CONGREGATION: I am writing these instructions so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Charge to Congregation and New Elders

In the New Testament, the church selected its leaders. One did not assume responsibility by his own decision. Having the proper qualifications, although essential, by itself did not make one a leader. There had to be the call and recognition by the people. We see this already in Acts 1 in selecting a successor to Judas. The company of disciples put forward two men who met the qualifications (Acts 1:23) and allowed the Lord, by the taking of lots, to choose his apostle. In Acts 6:1-6 the whole company of disciples chose seven men to administer the benevolent program. In 1 Corinthians 16:3 the church chose representatives to carry its gift to Jerusalem. The scriptures do not tell us how these selections were made, only that they were made by the whole church.

The Hillcrest Church, from its beginning, has selected elders by asking the congregation to put forward names. In recent weeks we have done this again, according to the procedures always followed in the past. There was a high participation by the members and a clear call for two men. Every name submitted was recorded, and every time that name appeared—from men, women, and children who are baptized—it was noted. As a result the names of Roger Gee and John Little were placed before the congregation to determine if anyone knew any reason why either should not serve as an overseer of this congregation. These men have received a strong vote of confidence from the membership, so we assemble tonight to ordain or install them in this ministry.

Shepherding is not the exclusive responsibility of elders or pastors of the church. Deacons are assistants of the elders. Care group leaders help in this work. Every Christian shares a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of his or her brothers and sisters. The appointed shepherds are not to do the work for the rest of us but to lead us and give us direction in our corporate or group life.

In the New Testament the persons chosen for public ministry in the church were recognized in a service of prayer and laying on of hands, as in Acts 14:23 and 13:3. The laying on of hands has nothing to do with apostolic succession, healing, bestowing miraculous power, or conferring the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of blessing, an accompaniment to the prayer that commends the person to God and asks his favor for the person in performing his duties.

The assumption of a public responsibility as a leader and representative of the church involves a commitment from the congregation to the person chosen and from that person to the congregation. I will address three questions to the congregation and ask for your response with the words "We do" to each. Then I will give a charge to the new elders and they will respond individually in prepared remarks.

(1) "Brothers and sisters, members of this church, do you regard Roger Gee and John Little as worthy of the work of elders?"

(2) "Do you, brothers and sisters, having sought divine guidance, accept these men as your spiritual overseers?"

(3) "Do you promise to give these leaders your honor, encouragement, and hearty support in the performance of their work?"

We read now the apostolic charge to elders in I Peter 5:1-4.