

# Questions for Elders

Dale Jenkins

A couple of quick disclaimers:

- I love elders! I've been blessed to work with twenty-five to fifty elders and by and large they are the very best men I've ever known!
  - While I don't purport to be an expert I'll start a list and let your comments add to it.
1. You want to watch how the elders interact with each other. Do they seem to get along? Is there a comfort or a tension when they are together? Are they real or artificial? Do they treat each other as peers or is one dominate? You might even ask that last as a question and WATCH their reaction. Now, you may or may not like what you learn and that may not be a reason to go or not BUT at least you know what you are getting and have to work with or toward.
  2. A lot of guys get all antsy about positions and there is some reason to know where they are on some issues. BUT, I'd suggest that may be even more important is how they handle their positions on those issues. If you talk long enough and/or work together long enough you WILL find areas where you do not see exactly the same. So, do they think about people more than the position? Are they sensitive and caring in dealing with "hard" positions or do they just plow forward? Is every "position" written in stone or are they willing to discuss? Do they have a know-it-all attitude or are they still learning? How do they treat people who differ from themselves? What do they say about those people in private.
  3. How do they deal with money? Are they a bunch of tightwads who wouldn't let go of a dollar for a soul or are they willing to spend to help for LOCAL outreach? Do they think a preacher should make "x" number of dollars or will you get cost of living raises (if you don't get at least that you are in reality making LESS each year)? My advice is that you ask them for a cost of living raise each year in advance. I always ask that elders at least discuss what I am paid each year—they may or may not give me a raise—but I don't want five years to go by and they have not even thought of it.
  4. Can they be wrong and admit it? Many elderships can't admit they are human—of course they will say they are—but they would never say—"We blew it." Some elderships are like the Fonz—"I was wrrrrnn...rrrrggg...wrrr". Ask them when was the last time they made a mistake and what it was. Did they own it?
  5. How do they appoint new elders? There are many ways to go about this process. Some elders think the way they do it is set in stone. Some elders treat themselves like a "self-perpetuating board". I do believe that elders can biblically appoint additional elders in a congregation—if they were selected to lead the church then that would be a form of leadership. But in our day it seems wise to involve the members in the process. I've seen

elders who refuse to appoint others as elders because they “think differently” than we do. I understand that but it’s a dangerous route.

6. Do they love the lost or just enjoy diverting attention? How often elderships seem to enjoy chasing rabbits and spinning their wheels on issues and problems than dealing with souls. Do they take time to pray for the lost and the fallen? Do they dismiss their responsibility or are they active in reaching the lost in the community they live in (beginning at Jerusalem).
7. Do they listen to the congregation? Do they think all practical wisdom resides within the three or six of them or are they wise enough to ask for input and help from the congregation? I’ve known churches with faithful, professional decorators in the body who determined colors and styles without any input. That sort of thing could be said of a myriad of issues. It is hard to keep the congregation together if they believe the elders do not respect them.