Ministerial Requirements

A Summary with Q & A



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NB: Unless indicated otherwise, most Scriptural quotes are ESV.

Elders must be "... **above reproach**, the husband of one wife, and his children are believer and not open to the charge of debauchery or **insubordination**. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be **arrogant** or quick-tempered or a drunkard or **violent** [even in words] or **greedy for gain**, but **hospitable**, a lover of good, **self-controlled**, upright, holy, and disciplined." (Titus 1:6-8)

Introduction

Following on from various other papers, it was thought that a little discussion from a Church of God perspective on Ministerial requirements. The bookshelves in Christian bookstores and online stores make many books on the subject available to study. Let alone the innumerable scholarly papers and numerous articles online.

Too many times in the Church, men not called into Biblical eldership are appointed due to cronyism, deceit/lying, personal networks, self-deception and so on. Most members quickly come to see that such a one is not authentic but pretending to be something he is not.

The shameful part of it is that his colleagues cover for him and let him do whatever he wants, claiming that God is using them to get rid of certain members, they cannot be questioned and that they cannot do any wrong as they are inspired.

Thus some men enter the ministry and gain the accolades they always wanted alas, they have their reward.

Some have spent their time creeping into groups, gaining the ascendancy and then pushing out long-time members and scattering them so that they can take over, eventually getting ordained. The offences they cause along the way and after they have attained their goals are horrendous but mostly kept secret. They, like thieves, attempt to steal the flock of other groups instead of being a friend.

While it is a blessing to have an authentic minister who is truly called into eldership, both mediocre and bad elders scatter the flock because they are self-centred and are doctrinally shallow. In such cases members know that it is best to have no minister The congregation will hold together until a good one is found. Rushing to get someone into the position results in the wrong person who then gets backed up but cannot perform at the job because God did not call them in the first instance.

Finally, this essay is not merely a summary of ministerial requirements, but also attributes and behaviours unbecoming of a minister. Attributes that have been hanging around the Church for decades and entrenched in certain areas. Cunningly taught and practiced behind the back of the senior leadership.

"Therefore **all who devour you shall be devoured, and all your foes, every one of them,** shall go into captivity; **those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who prey on you I will make a prey**.
For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the Lord, because they have called you an outcast: 'It is Zion *[or the members]*, for whom no one cares!'" (Jeremiah 30:16-17)

Part 1. Ministerial Requirements and Behaviours

Key Scriptures

Some make the claim that to become an elder one only has to be in command of their family, be able to teach and be of good report to those outside of the Church. Isn't it easy to simply list those few requirements to set up the members to accept he which they have in mind for ordination?

What of the other criteria? What of the beatitudes and the fruit of the spirit? What about just general goodness? And what about not being jealous of others and forming cliques, trying to isolate others they imagine as competition?

Why not ask those he has caused problems for over the years instead of only his relatives and friends? These make claims that they "are not comfortable" with so-and-so making all sorts of accusations. The real reason is that they view them as rivals and must make excuses and use subtleties to undermine and isolate such ones.

Another claim that is made is that 'I have seen men transformed into true servants once ordained' and such like. This is not the truth and has no Biblical basis. You see, for us on the receiving end we have not experienced that. Genuine men who are ordained continue on being genuine.

But those who are not authentic – well they will continue on with their carnal ways but will do worse because they will become entrenched, empowered and are difficult to dislodge. They will surround themselves with friends who will be given all the opportunities while those considered rivals at best will be isolated but normally driven out of the congregation.

Not all verses on eldership are quoted below – only those considered key.

1 Peter 5:1–3
"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, **not under compulsion, but willingly**, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **not domineering** over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

The New Testament designation for those leading churches is "elders." This role appears consistently across congregations, including in northern Asia Minor, indicating it as the standard leadership structure during the latter part of the first century and.

Elder's duty is to shepherd the flock (Gk. *poimainō*, meaning "to herd sheep; to guide as a shepherd"; cf. John 21:16; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11). The English term is "pastor" (from Latin *pastor* = "shepherd"). They also exercise oversight (Gk. *episkopeō*), the verbal counterpart to "overseer" (Gk. *episkopos*), another synonymous title (cf. Acts 20:28). "Shepherd" and "exercising oversight" highlight the practical duties of elders—nurturing and protecting the congregation—while "elder" denotes the position itself.

1 Timothy 3:1–7
"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer **must be above reproach**, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, **self-**

controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, **not violent [KJV = brawler] but gentle, not quarrelsome,** not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, **he must be well thought of by outsiders**, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

Rather than detailing job duties, Paul focuses on character traits. In Acts 20:28, Paul addresses Ephesian elders (Gk. *presbyteros*, Acts 20:17) as those the God appointed overseers (Gk. *episkopos*) to shepherd (Gk. *poimainō*) God's church. "Above reproach" tops the list as the overarching requirement, elaborated in the subsequent qualities.

Surely, to be above reproach, those who are not family or friends should be approached to find out what they think of the man slated for ordination? Perhaps he was abusive, slandering them, isolating them and so on.

An example of not being above reproach is when they cause trouble and scatter the flock, blaming others for what they have done. Selectively sending information to colleagues and friends to gather support to himself instead of apologising and fixing the problem. Trying to pin his problems on others and pretending to be the hurt party is a dead giveaway that he is not authentic.

The phrase "husband of one wife" (Gk. *mias gynaikos andra*) is literally "a one-woman man," interpretations include: (1. marital fidelity – no dirty talk and pornography; (2. exclusion of polygamists, focussing on monogamy. "Able to teach" refers to a skill essential for elders – not attending one's own church's studies, using others to do the in-depth teaching and using other's resources instead of preparing one's own, are tell-tale signs of a fake teacher - one who wants to be ordained and weasels his way into the position.

1 Timothy 5:17
"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching."

"Labor" (Gk. *kopiaō*), akin to "toil" in 4:10, denotes major effort. Paul is in effect saying that such a one needs to be provided for but does not state the exact amounts.

Acts 20:28
"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

Leaders must prioritise integrity. "The church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" alludes to Christ's sacrificial atonement (cf. Romans 3:25; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7). "God" here probably denotes Christ as Divine head; alternatively, if the Father, "his own blood" means that of His Son.

Taking care of the flock includes to treat everyone equally, no cronyism, no abuse, no slandering, no jealousy and no spies. And not blocking gifts and talents using all sorts of tactics driven by jealousy or power-tripping. No vindictiveness and revengefulness.

Jealousy is NOT a Godly Attribute!

The issue of jealousy and the 'spirit of competition' should be addressed. It is unfortunate and a major cause of organisational dysfunctionality and lack of growth and happiness. Jealousy saps the 'body' and those who practice such, as one person says, "snatches from us the 'joy of salvation'" (cp. Nehemiah 8:10; John 15:10-11; 16:24; Psalm 16:11; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 1:8-9).

"Not that we lord it over your faith, but **we work with you** for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith." (2 Corinthians 1:24)

Working with fellow Christians to enable and increase their joy includes spending time with them; not accusing them or lying about them; not being jealous; not putting them down in public presentations based on hearsay; not preventing them from using God's gifts and talents He has bestowed upon them. But rather hearing from them personally about how Christ is working in them and using their gifts and talents for the benefit of others. And how to further this. Those who do not practice this, become lords over God's precious children.

Working with them even when the minister is not a historian, anthropologist and such like is what is needed. Pretending to have knowledge of every area of science and overruling members or preventing them from carrying out their skills and knowledge is cultic and not found in the Bible or Church teaching.

But, as they cannot 'get you' on that issue (eg having a book published or running events), they will spread untruths all over. They will lie in wait and try and get something on you, including setting you up by using spies. Lying about the member accusing them of this or that which the accuser is guilty of, is a common practice.

Negative criticisms accusing them that they are ambitious and seek recognition is based on jealousy and is not becoming of a Christian and ***not*** building up the brethren.
It is self-seeking and abusive.

My old article on ***Jealousy and Envy in Scripture*** discusses the concept. A related Bible study is ***Do You Block the Talents of Others?*** And those who gain satisfaction from undermining others and/or gain the position or outcome they crave, then ***They have their reward.***

Some insist that members cannot write books, have blogs or newsletters, cannot have websites or do research etc. Nor visit other groups. This, of course, is contrary to the Bible and their own church's policies, but they rebel against their leadership like Korah.

Many have had sad experiences as have I. In the 1980s I was persecuted horrendously when I minister heard that I was going to get a book on the origin of nations published. Similar horrific experiences occurred later to which there are dozens of witnesses when I organised seminars. Slander was the order of the day. Seeing success and doing something to help the church is just not welcomed.

Elders are there to ensure the gifts and talents that the Christian's Father has granted them, are utilised. They are not there to be jealous and go behind a member's back to undermine them to his colleagues, family and other members. Yet slander is the order of the day because "God uses us" and "we are above the law of the land".

Titus 1:5–9
"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is **above reproach**, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or **insubordination**. For an overseer, as God's steward, **must be above reproach**. He must **not be arrogant** or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but **hospitable, a lover** of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and **disciplined**. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

"Above reproach" (echoed in Titus 1:7) summarises the criteria, expanded in vv. 6–9: no valid charge should stick to the elder. Teaching distinguishes elders: affirming truth and countering falsehood and false doctrines.

"Insubordination" (ἀσωτίας ἢ ἀνυπότακτα) refers to flagrantly not obeying a reasonable request or command – not willing to submit to the order of authority that God has put into place. According to the commentaries, this Greek word is the opposite to submit. Examples when one is ordered to preach on the doctrines, establish clubs, apologise for wrongs, quit slandering, move to another area and more. Rebelling like Korah is what this also entails – that is such a one must not undermine the authority over him by going to his peers to get them onside. All this is done behind the scenes in the hope that no one notices.

Teaching thoroughly and in depth the entire Word of God, holding Bible studies, understanding and teaching all the doctrines of the Church are essential requirements for eldership. Otherwise he is a charlatan and holds little knowledge of the Word and doctrines – and cannot answer even basic Bible questions.

1 Timothy 4:1–2
"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of **liars** whose **consciences are seared** …"

False teachers' consciences are numbed by defiance and quite rebellion. They remain in the Church, deceiving and being deceived.

They lie and have the habit of doing so to such an extent, that few notice it. They cannot bring themselves to believe that "a minister of Jesus Christ" can do such a thing. Their lying about members starts with their wife and children and then continues on the fellows and to friends thereby destabilising the member and setting such a one up. He/she subsequently becomes unpopular and is sometimes attacked and even shouted at by the sycophants who are spies, running to the minister with reports to gain 'brownie points' as one member put it. They get so worked up that they shout "get out of the church".

They engage ministers from their former group or other groups, spreading the lies which are actually slander and defamation.

However, when members get to learn over time that the member is innocent of the claims – even disgusting claims – then the accuser changes tactics. "He/she has now changed and overcome the problem" they then state.

Disgusting; evil; sinful!

No training will help them. Though these sorts refuse proper training and prefer their buddies and mentors to "train" them – not in real Biblical pastorship – but in how to "get away with it". After all, they have no qualifications or real experience in training and but use that time to clone themselves when the trainee should, rather, have been sent to college.

List of Ministerial Requirements

The following thoughtful list was found on the internet:

• Children are obedient	• Titus 1:6
• Children are obedient	• 1 Tim. 3:4-5
• Has Faithful Wife	• 1 Tim. 3:10
• Has Pure Conscience	• 1 Tim. 3:9
• Holds Sound Doctrine	• Titus 1:9
• Honest, No Hypocrite	• 1 Tim. 3:8
• Hospitable	• Titus 1:8
• Humble, Not Arrogant	• Titus 1:7
• Husband of One Wife	• 1 Tim. 3:2, 12
• Keeps Faithful Word	• Titus 1:9
• Lover of Good	• Titus 1:8
• Man of Character	• 1 Tim. 3:8
• Man of Integrity	• 1 Tim. 3:2
• Not a New Convert	• 1 Tim. 3:6
• Not Covetous	• 1 Tim. 3:3
• Not Given to Wine	• 1 Tim. 3:12
• Not Greedy	• Titus 1:7
• Not Quarrelsome	• 1 Tim. 3:3
• Not Quick-Tempered	• Titus 1:7
• Not Violent	• 1 Tim. 3:3
• Of a Sound Mind	• Titus 1:8
• Of Good Behavior	• 1 Tim. 3:2
• Of Good Reputation	• 1 Tim. 3:7
• Patient	• 1 Tim. 3:3
• Refutes Gainsayers	• Titus 1:9
• Righteous in Hospitality	• Titus 1:8
• Rules His House Well	• 1 Tim. 3:12
• Self-Controlled	• Titus 1:8
• Skillful in Teaching	• 1 Tim. 3:2
• Sober, Vigilant	• Titus 1:8
• Steadfast in Faith	• 1 Tim. 3:9
• Student of the Word	• 2 Tim. 2:15

The above list is useful as it provides an easy way to study and comprehend ministerial duties.

The Churches of God can learn a lot from specialists in various fields. In this area of the Bible, Alexander Strauch's *Biblical Eldership* (Lewis & Roth, 2003) is comprehensive. Another resource

is *Biblical Eldership Resources* newsletter which discussed the life of a prominent protestant minister, Robert Chapman:

> "Chapman became legendary in his own time for his gracious ways, his patience, his kindness, his balanced judgment, his ability to reconcile people in conflict, his absolute fidelity to Scripture, and his loving pastoral care. By the end of his life, Chapman was known worldwide for his love, wisdom and compassion. He became so well known in England that a letter from abroad addressed only to "R. C. Chapman, University of Love, England" was correctly delivered to him!" (14 November 2025)

One does not have to be a Sabbatarian to be exemplary in conduct and loving others in a non-militaristic manner.

Conclusions

In the end, picking the right minister boils down to one thing: Godly character over everything else (not pretending to be undertaking the role prior to ordination) and proper training. The Bible spells it out clearly – they must be above reproach (eg not undermining and isolating others and forming cliques), faithful in marriage, in control of their home, and able to teach God's Word with depth. No shortcuts, no cronyism, no jealousy, no cliquishness, no pushing aside good people just to grab power.

A true elder shepherds willingly, uses the gifts and talents of members (ie is not jealous), lives as an example, and puts the flock first – not his ego or being lazy (not taking breaks and holidays constantly) or his wallet. If someone is scheming their way into the ministry, jealous of other's gifts/talents/achievements, the congregation will feel it soon enough and scatter. Better to wait patiently on God for the real deal than settle for a fake who views God's children with disdain.

The question now arises: "What if one gains the position, one has been lusting after and manoeuvring into for so long?"

Answer: "They have their reward'. But they will fail in the endeavour causing ever more offences and problems.

They will enjoy a "honeymoon" period but slowly and surely, members will awaken to the disaster of a slow-moving Titanic. But stubbornness and cronyism will lead his colleagues to support the minister against the majority of the congregation mouthing the usual mantra that "God backs up government" even when their own church does not promulgate such a view.

If no genuine candidate for such an office is available, then it is best to have no elder at all. The local congregation can continue and will survive without a bad or inadequate minister.

Let's pray for leaders who love the truth, serve humbly, and help every member to shine. That's the kind of ministry that builds up the church and honours Christ, the living Head of the Church.

Part 2: Questions and Answers

Can Ministers (or regions) refuse to implement the doctrines, policies and the ways of the Church that ordained them?

There are those who think that they are independent of their international governing body and home office and have even said so. Why don't they put that in writing to the ruling bodies and general membership?

You see, the **ONLY** situation where a region or a minister can declare independence is where there is conflict between local legislation and the policies of the Church – and that is it. In **EVERY** other way they are subject to the Church authorities. After all, they have signed up to it: ordination; the Constitution; Bylaws; Rules of Association; Fundamentals of Belief and the other doctrines; various policies; the church's literature; and much more. How does that make them independent?

If it does, then the general membership can choose to be under the international church authority instead so as not be partake in a rebellious attitude. It works both ways.

As Mr Armstrong wrote in "Romans 13 and the State of California Attack," *Good News*, March 1980:

> "Now notice what a "scholarly" commentary says in expounding Romans 13. Speaking of government rulers: "If he rules according to the Constitution nothing can justify (the individual) rebelling against his authority**... When the ruler acts thus (contrary to law or the Constitution) he dissolves the compact between him and his people; his authority is no longer binding, but illegal; and it is illegal because he is acting contrary to the laws of the Constitution**, according to which, on being raised to the supreme power he promised to govern. This conduct justifies opposition to his government" — and the commentary means in GOD'S sight! (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*)"

This principle can easily be applied to the Church of God if some do not go along with their own Church's positions.

Can Ministers refuse to Preach and Believe the Church's Doctrines?

Some doctrines have been part of the Church's teachings for decades, but some ministers have actually held to different views privately or by virtue of not preaching on them or by stating so publicly.

However, they all they signed up to paperwork to "uphold" the doctrines of the Church – not to ignore them or to prevent others from preaching them. Many statements have been made by some that they do not believe in the US & Britain doctrine, God Family, born again, Sabbath, clean & unclean meats, who is the Beast and more. They will say they do if confronted but continue to not preach on them.

Newer people haven't much knowledge about so many teachings due to them not being taught in sermons or Bibe studies and have brought in silly ideas about the tribes of Israel, *Book of Enoch*, flat earth etc because of lack of knowledge, capacity or care by the minister.

Why do some heap up teachers and have itching ears instead of adhering to the doctrine of the Church and elders?

The Church is based on Christ and His teachings. However, it is sad to say that many find certain sermonettes and sermons as inadequate because they are so shallow and the doctrines not preached since 1995.

Instead of believing one is a priest and that one's sermons are inspired of God – that He speaks directly through him – one should clothe oneself with humility (1 Peter 5:5).

So, when they are inadequate, not interesting, not going deeper into God's Word, **not preaching all the doctrines of the Church** and simply just lazy recycling of sermons every 2 or so years – God's children get bored and, unfortunately, some start looking to others outside the Church for interesting sermons and literature. Or weird ideas and theories (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Can Members Petition the Leadership?

If a member or a group of members wish to petition the Church leadership about issues, they get wrongfully branded as rebels and likened to Korah. However, Numbers 16 discusses Korah's rebellion - it is about the Levite Korah (read pastor) who was opposed to the leadership (read Church leadership) of Israel (read Church). Today that would be equivalent to some who are opposed to the Church's doctrines, values and policies and want to do things their way contrary to their training, Church policies, manuals and instructions So, because they refuse to preach many doctrines, follow the values, *Constitution*, *Bylaws*, *Rules of Association*, policies and want to run things their way – in effect taking the place of the leadership, *they* can be likened to Korah (compare Numbers 16:10).

Then a few Israelites (read Church members) were upset with God dealing with Korah and rebelled also and were dealt with. So, there were those loyal to the leadership (petitioners) and those that peeled off and wanted to support the trouble-maker (Korah).

One wonders how petitioners can be compared to Korah & co or become like them? The opposite is the case – they are/were standing up for the Church, its leadership, the Church's values and against members being abused.

In a most unjust fashion some will meddle behind your back to prevent the correct Biblical outcome (justice) by intervening in the process and setting up those looking into a matter against those with the complaint.

> "Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears." (Proverbs 26:17)

Which means

> "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him,.... One that going along the streets, and passing by the door, where two or more persons are quarrelling, and he thrusts himself in and intermeddles in the affair he has no concern in; and interests himself in the cause of the quarrel he has nothing to do with, **on account of acquaintance, relation, or office**; and especially when, **instead of being a mediator and peacemaker, he takes on one side**, and acts

> the angry part, as Aben Ezra interprets the word rendered "meddleth"; blows things up into a greater flame, and enrages the one against the other." (*Gills Exposition of the Entire Bible*)

Claiming that members who petition because of a bad situation are rebels, is appalling.

Do Ministers have unlimited power (based on Hebrews 13:7)?

Some apply Hebrews 13:7 to order around members and make unjust rulings because they believe that they have unlimited authority etc that is somehow instilled into them upon ordination, though the Church does not teach that:

> "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation." (KJV)

However, a better translation is

> "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

As much as I love and appreciated the King James Version of the Bible, I also am aware of the politics behind it which you can read in a range of books and articles.[1]

When King James called for the new translation, he was adamant that it must fit the doctrine and agenda of the Anglican Church and his own which skewed Scripture for this purpose and Heb 13:7 is one example of this stance.

> "Though the Puritan translators wanted to translate key Greek words in ways favoring their ecclessiology — e.g., translating *episcopos* as "overseer" instead of "bishop", *presbuteros* as "elder" instead of "priest", and *ecclessia* as "congregation" instead of "Church" — King James insisted that they use the traditional terms to translate them, i.e., he kept them from changing anything." ("Why did King James alter the Bible, and why is his version used?" https://www.quora.com/Why-did-King-James-alter-the-Bible-and-why-is-his-version-used)

The ministry has limited power and cannot assume power not given to them in the Bible or by their Church or by federal or state legislatures. Or make up rules or regulations to suit themselves. Rather, they are employed or ordained by a particular organisation and must comply with it, not set themselves up in place of or in rivalry to their head office or ruling board.

There are limits to human power and even the kings of Israel were supposed to be a sort of constitutional monarchy. The laws of human governments also place a break on excesses (Romans 13:1-7).

Do Ministers sit on Moses Seat?

This is answered in the article *Bible Study Notes: Do Ministers Sit on Moses Seat?*

[1] For instance Michael Rather's article "About the Political Dimensions of the Formation of the King James Bible," *Purdue*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 1-10 and *Story Behind King James Bible*, https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1601-1700/story-behind-king-james-bible-11630052.html

The short of it is that a minister on his own does not. Rather, it is an impartial panel that investigates or rules on very serious matters.

Are Ministers above the Law of God?

Some ministers have taught that, based on Matthew 12:3-8, they (as priests) are above God's Law (and even man's).

> "He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him:
> how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?
> Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?
> I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.
> And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.
> For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

However, the pertinent verse (Matthew 12:5) should be translated

> "Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple **'profane'** the Sabbath and are guiltless?" (ie inverted commas to indicate sarcasm).[2]

Note also

> "Profane the Sabbath - He referred them to the conduct of the priests also. On the Sabbath days they were engaged, as well as on other days, in killing beasts for sacrifice, Numbers 28:9-10. Two lambs were killed on the Sabbath, in addition to the daily sacrifice. The priests must be engaged in killing them, and making fires to burn them in sacrifice, whereas to kindle a fire was expressly forbidden the Jews on the Sabbath, Exodus 35:3. **They did that which, for other persons to do, would have been "profaning" the Sabbath**. Yet they were blameless. They did what was necessary and commanded. This was done in the very temple, too, the place of holiness, where the law should be most strictly observed. (*Barnes Notes on the Old and New Testaments*).[3]

In other words, they were not profaning the Sabbath any more than the armies of Israel were guilty of murder when God ordered them to slay pagan tribes. Otherwise they would have been guilty of sin and literally profaning. It must be the use of sarcasm again by Christ.

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[2] see also https://relevantmagazine.com/god/4-times-jesus-used-sarcasm-to-make-a-point/

[3] Some researchers have this as a 'tongue in cheek' comment or that the word should be in inverted commas, viz "profane". Because to the Pharisees what Christ and His disciples were doing was law-breaking, yet far less than what was required of the priests on the Sabbath. Priestly duties were not profaning the Sabbath any more than the death sentence for certain serious sins was breaking the 6th commandment. In other words, they were not profaning the Sabbath any more than the armies of Israel were guilty of murder when God ordered them to slay pagan tribes, otherwise they would have been guilty of sin and literally profaning. It must be the use of sarcasm again by Christ.

> "The Jews were so superstitious, concerning the observance of the Sabbath, that in their wars with *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and the *Romans*, they thought it a crime even to attempt to defend themselves on the Sabbath: when their enemies observed this, they deterred their operations to that day. It was through this, that *Pompey* was enabled to take Jerusalem." (Adam Clarke's *Commentary on the Whole Bible*)

What they regarded as profaning and what God does, are two different things.

So, for anyone to try and find Scriptures to support their behaviours puts their spiritual lives in danger and also affects others. Spiritual abuse is a terrible thing.

Also, as some claim to be 'priests,' they say that they are even above man's law – by covering up for each other when there are certain illegal activities (such as defamation or corruption), they can avoid the full force of the law (but see Romans 13:1-7).

Are Ministers "above the law of the land"?

The laws of man can form a restraint upon human nature - they teach us human conduct, tame and civilise peoples. These human laws are also a safeguard for all – in particular the poor and underprivileged or those without much influence and power. No one is beyond or above the law of the land (Romans 13:1-7).

What if they mentally abuse someone? Or interfere with their relationships? Or indulge in defamation and slander and nothing is done to stop the harm they create?

Yet certain ministers have said that they are above the law of the land even where it is not in conflict with the law of God. Why have they not researched the Bible on this; or talked with Church leaders?

Mr Herbert W Armstrong addressed this in a sermon *Just What is the Church?* In 1970 he addressed this:

> "Now I have shown that the true Church of God is NOT a human organization or corporation, but a spiritual organism, composed of all who have and are being led by the Holy Spirit of God abiding in them. Yet the Church is ORGANIZED... "
> "But is the corporation the Church?
> IT IS NOT! The Church existed as a spiritual organism, organized as CHRIST organized it (NOT organized on any human plan), and it carried on the SAME Work of God.
> What about incorporating according to the civil laws of man? The answer is: **God instructs His Church to be subject to the powers of man's government over him.**
> When — in our time — the Work of God was small there was no need of being incorporated. This Work was NOT incorporated until it became necessary in order to deal with the world in carrying out the Commission to go to the world with Christ's Gospel. The Work has grown worldwide and very large, and human governmental laws would not allow it to function without incorporating." [emphasis mine]

Ten years later he wrote in an article titled "Romans 13 and the State of California Attack," *Good News*, March 1980:

> "Now notice what a "scholarly" commentary says in expounding Romans 13. Speaking of government rulers: "If he rules according to the Constitution nothing can justify (the individual) rebelling against his authority... When the ruler acts thus (contrary to law or the Constitution) he dissolves the compact between him and his people; his authority is no longer binding, but illegal; and it is illegal because he is acting contrary to the laws of the Constitution, according to which, on being raised to the supreme power he promised to govern. This conduct justifies opposition to his government" — and the commentary means in GOD'S sight! (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*)"

Paul Johnson, the famous British historian wrote:

> "The rule of law, as distinct from the rule of a person, or class or people, and as opposed to the rule of force, is an abstract, sophisticated concept. It is mighty difficult to achieve. But until it is achieved, and established in the public mind with such vehemence that masses of individuals are prepared to die to uphold it, no other form of progress can be regarded as secure. The Greeks had tried to establish the rule of law but failed. The Romans had succeeded under their republic, but Caesar and his successors had destroyed it. The essence of the rule of law is its impersonality, omnipotence and ubiquity. **It is the same law for everyone, everywhere—kings, emperors, high priests, the state itself, are subject to it. If exceptions are made, the rule of law begins to collapse**—that was the grand lesson of antiquity" ("No Law Without Order, No Freedom Without Law," *Sunday Telegraph*, 26 December 1999) [emphasis mine].

There is not supposed to be one rule for a minister and his friends and another rule for others.

Does God bind in heaven what Ministers bind on earth?

Some think that they are so inspired that they are above the law of the land or even Church policies that they can ignore them because they are 'inspired.' If you think their decisions are contradictory, it is your imagination. If you are given advice it is as if Christ Himself is speaking through the minister. If the advice is not adhered to, you are a rebel. If the advice is followed and you are not blessed, it is your fault and you hold a secret sin. And if you are not healed after anointing, it is your fault and sin.

Because they are so inspired, they do not need training in counselling and such like. Because God somehow forces through some kind of energy dump through them to make correct judicial decisions and thus independent panels or judiciaries are not needed – despite the Biblical model and requirement. Matthew 18:15-18 is suspended or reinterpreted so that they or their friends always win.

So they bind decisions on earth which God backs up.

However, the Bible clearly shows otherwise. Note the online article by the United Church of God *What are the "keys of the kingdom" referred to in Matthew 16:19? (*https://www.ucg.org/bible-

study-tools/bible-questions-and-answers/what-are-the-keys-of-the-kingdom-referred-to-in-matthew-1619).

> "God is not obligated to bind an ungodly decision. In other words, Christ would lead the Church leadership to decisions that He had already bound in heaven, not vice versa."

Also, in *Balloting in the Church. Doctrinal Study Paper,* the United Church of God states:

> "Christ is speaking to the apostles (plural). Jesus was not giving Peter or anyone else unilateral authority to bind and loose decisions. This plurality reflects the need for the apostles to arrive at collaborative decisions." (p. 5)

Nowhere does God back up an elder regardless of abuses, sins or corruption. Covering up, redacting and breaking the law of the land is ungodly. Instead, the elder is confirming decisions God has already made in His Law.

Yet some persist with a rebellious spirit, oppressing the brethren and driving them away. A true shepherd does the opposite – he attracts people and gathers them together.

Doesn't Numbers 27:18-23 mean that Ministers are responsible to God only?

Nothing can be found that such is current Church of God teaching or was officially taught or sanctioned from at least the early 1970s but may have been taught in the 1960s. This Scripture, of course, has to do with the political transfer of power and not ordination of ministers. Nevertheless, I insert this matter into the document because it is used in a similar way to the 'ministers are priests' belief.

> "So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.
> Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight.
> You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.
> And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation."
> And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation,
> and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses."

Some take this to mean that that is all that is required for ordination of New Testament ministers. It is thought that just because they pray about it and the actual ordination is performed in front of the congregation, that legitimises it. That all who are ordained are thus on the track.

Consider that when ordinations of elders in the Synagogue and during the New Testament times were similarly performed (refer to the article *Synagogue and Church: Comparative Structures*), how many stayed on track? How many were genuine? How many had the heart of a shepherd?

Decision on who would be successor to Moses would have been well-known prior to public confirmation. Similarly, those selected for eldership were well-known and the congregation would have been asked about them, their conduct, behaviours and private doctrines prior to ordination.

There was no such thing as 'once ordained, always ordained.' If you did not measure up or perform your duties you were let go. The congregation did not have to endure suffering needlessly due to inept or bad leadership.

Now let us ask ourselves, if every ordination was legitimate, then why did Paul warn about false ministers in our midst?

Why did Jude? Jude's letter concentrates on false ministers that infiltrate the Church. Compare for instance Jude 12 with Ezekiel 34:1-4 (cp. 2 Peter 2:10).[4]

What about Armstrong berating both the ministry and membership in the early 1980s roaring 'half of you just don't get it'?[5]

How about well over 50% not staying with the truth after the passing of HWA? Are we so soon to forget?

So, Numbers 27:18-23 should be studied respectfully and in deep reflection of God's Word. Frivolously finding this or that Scripture to support a position is not good enough.

Today, the Church of God does not teach that Numbers 27:18-23 only applies to elders. Nor the notion that because it is God Who does the actual ordination through a human instrument, it is between them and God, and they cannot be corrected or reported for wrong-doing or dereliction of duty or refusal to teach the Church's doctrines and such like.

But Numbers 27 and other such Scriptures applies to ***all*** of us typologically (elders and non-elders alike). In that sense it shows that it is God Himself Who puts us into the Church – He is the one that calls us into His Church and His spiritual priesthood. This is the real typology behind this Scripture. Refer to ***All About Water Baptism by Herbert W Armstrong*** to read what he wrote about and Who actually calls and baptises us.

As such, the attitude that "it is just between me and God and no man can correct me to change, only God can do that" is incorrect though touted many times. Be careful what you wish for!

> "for whoever may give you to drink a cup of water in my name, because ye are Christ's, verily I say to you, he may not lose his reward;
> and whoever may cause to stumble one of the little ones believing in me, better is it for him if a millstone is hanged about his neck, and he hath been cast into the sea." (Mark 9:41-42)
>
> "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)

So, be very careful what you wish for!

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[4] Jude has a maritime theme – see especially verses 12-13.
[5] Refer also to his articles "Why some ministers have failed" and "Now God speaks to you Ministers" for proof.

Refer to *Herbert W Armstrong and the Reform of Church Governance*.

Should Members not be relieved when an oppressor leaves the Ministry?

There have been times when ministers have been so oppressive and even cultic in behaviour that members have sighed with relief and even showed joy when a certain minister moved to another area or left the ministry.

Is that wrong to do?

The Scripture distinctly states: "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." (Proverbs 29:2). See also Proverbs 11:10; 28:12, 15; 20:26.

The Church is meant to be a community, with loving relationships between the members and elders - and of course, of paramount, with the Father and Christ. As Herbert W Armstrong wrote in 1960, we have *direct* access to God (ie not via priests):

> "Jesus Christ paid THE SUPREME PENALTY for us -- WHY? To purchase **for us ACCESS DIRECT TO GOD the Supreme FATHER over all! To DENY that access is to DENY the very blood of Jesus Christ! ...**
> Jesus Christ, who is very GOD, is also our ELDER BROTHER! He made it possible for us to have access to the Father so that we might be begotten by the FATHER. We are not begotten by our elder BROTHER. A brother does not beget and sire brothers! We are begotten by our FATHER into HIS FAMILY.
> My sons and daughters have always had a FAMILY RELATIONSHIP with, and full access to, ME. All of us who are God's begotten children have ACCESS to GOD THE FATHER. And, **we also have access to our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, and to our still human but begotten brothers and sisters! It is a WONDERFUL family relationship!**
> Yes, PRAISE GOD for it! We have access direct to the FATHER -- and also to Jesus Christ! Many times DAILY we may go into intimate COMMUNION with BOTH God and Christ -- our FATHER and our BROTHER! Our GOD and our SAVIOUR! HOW WONDERFUL to really come to KNOW the great supreme GOD! How grateful to Jesus we should be for making this blessed privilege possible! **The MOST JOYOUS thing in life is to have this COMMUNION -- this close and intimate FELLOWSHIP with BOTH the FATHER and Christ the SON**!" ("Should we pray to God, or only to Christ?" *Good News*, May 1960, pp. 5-8, 12) [emphasis mine]

Ministers are elders, not priests. Nor are they to put on an air of pretence as if they are invincible in some way and that "God always backs me up" or that "Government always backs me up" or that they are "tough guys" and thus they cannot be reported, critiqued, corrected and such like. As a result many spiritual crimes which are committed are not addressed and thus continue on and on and on and on, wrecking congregations and lives of many. They continue on for decades through one group and into another, taught as if these are normal practices and covered up by colleagues. So when probed and investigated, they are covered up and hard to resolve.

They do not know – or want to know – the terrifying fate that awaits them unless they repent:

> "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)

Can Minister have Spies in the Congregation?

Some ministers have spies in their congregations who they always believe. In one congregation I attended, the incoming minister was disgusted and alarmed by the cultic conduct of his predecessor who, amongst other things, had spies who reported to him regularly.

1. How did he know that those reporting to him had an accurate report; or
2. Were not lying about their enemies or those they are jealous of?

They must have known that such ones were sycophants, seeking 'pats on the head' or wanting to give sermonettes; and in some cases, desperate for ordination.

It is this issue of the structure where there are no checks 'n balances and a minister is free to do whatever he pleases without restraint that is the underlying cause of all this.

The Bible, however, warns:

Proverbs 20:19
"Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbler." A minister who cultivates informants creates a culture of talebearing. God commands leaders not to associate with people who peddle secret information about others.

Galatians 2:4
Paul warns against "false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery." Scripture views "spying" on fellow believers as a tool of legalism and division, not healthy spiritual oversight!

Proverbs 18:17
Here we have the principle of cross-examination: "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." When a minister listens to a spy, they are hearing only one side. Without confronting the accused party directly, the report is almost guaranteed to be biased, missing context, or entirely inaccurate. This causes mistrust, division and bad-blood between members.

Exodus 23:1
There is a Biblical ban on false reports: "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness." Informants often operate out of unverified assumptions, personal offenses, or gossip. Accepting an unverified report makes the minister a participant in the sin of bearing false witness.

Proverbs 29:5
"A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet." Flattery is dangerous to a leader. Sycophants do not report out of a pure love for the flock; they filter their reports to tell the minister exactly what they think the minister wants to hear, effectively setting a trap for the leader's discernment while destroying the reputation of others.

Proverbs 17:4
"An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue." A leader who listens to sycophantic reports trains their congregation to act deceitfully to gain a competitive advantage or "brownie points."

Jude 1:16
Jude warns against divisive people who are "grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage." This is the ultimate definition of a sycophant - using targeted reporting and manipulation to secure influence, visibility, or safety within the church structure.

Psalm 101:5
"Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy." Sycophants and those who use them must be very careful! I have personally had a minister try and use me as a sycophant and I refused. That didn't help me at all, but at least I am at peach with God.

Murmurings or discussions?
Notice:

> "Do all things **without grumbling [KJV = murmurings] or disputing**; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world …" (Philippians 2:14-15)

It is easy to turn to Scriptures such as this. But they do not refer to groaning under oppression, but *wrongful* murmurings. How can one not groan under oppression?

By those who have suffered unethically, take comfort:

> "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, **so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame**. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." (1 Peter 3:13-17)

Discussing what is going on in the church is not murmuring at all. In fact, murmuring is being disgruntled against good decisions or governance and rebellion, *not* bad behaviours and decisions. Murmurings has more to do with complaints for no reason and malicious slander, mutterings, not a discussion about facts! Trying to stop revelations about bad things going on is unbiblical (Ephesians 5:12).

Should Elders excommunicate someone or declare members as "not in good standing" behind their back?
We must all look at ourselves and take responsibility for our actions. More so ministers who are hired and paid by their particular church and are expected to abide by its doctrines and its principles – not run off on a tangent.

For example, without their knowledge or involvement, members have been excommunicated on flimsy grounds or declared doctrinal heretics when they are not. Others are declared "not in good standing" behind their backs with other ministers directed not to tell them. And when found out and confronted, they have no reason for this. But:

1. some ministers themselves do not believe in or hold to different doctrines to their church themselves. The have themselves said so privately; even publicly; and refuse to preach on them because they don't believe them. Yet, unethically and even illegally, draw salary from an organisation they don't agree with.
2. due process is often not followed. A heavy-handed approach leads to one becoming puffed up with power.

Patience and working with the (supposedly) sinning member should be paramount, getting them back on track. Because good communications leads to good cooperation and then long-term relationships. Slander and defamation of members behind their backs on councils and committees will result in actions to resolve the matter, even if it takes years. Christ stood up to the Pharisees and Herbert Armstrong similarly stood up to his detractors.

This thing that one should not report or have an abusive minister dealt with because "Christ will sort it out" is just not Biblical or common sense. All such an approach does is cover up these crimes and let the perpetrator and his allies get away with it, continuing the oppression for years and decades. Those who protect the guilty participate in the crime. Legally, before God, this is complicity.

Best to not protect one's friend or relative than be guilty of hurting God's flock or any human being.

> "The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.
> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for **murderers [which includes spiritual murders and slander]**, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and **all liars**, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:7-8)

To try and get around this by claiming that they are above the law of God and even above the law of the land is blasphemous.

Much of these behaviours are due to jealousy, envy, the spirit of competition and such like which are carnal, leading to the members being 'put down' and preventing them from participating in the local congregation. All sorts of unbecoming excuses are used, but never an admission to the real reason: the spirit of competition and a sense of rivalry.

How do they get away with such conduct? Why is this so?

It goes back to the idea that God always 'backs up government' and 'ministers have to always be backed up regardless of what they do'! Some have stated that openly. As such, they can never be questioned or their conduct challenged as that would result in actions against the members.

The statement that they do not have to follow Matthew 18:15-18 as God inspires them to make correct judgments and decisions is appalling.

Well, that means that they can have the outcome they want and you "just have to accept that" and "you have to trust God's representatives." All this because they teach each other that "God backs up government" rather than "God backs up His Word and Laws which form the foundation of His governance."

Yet the Bible teaches due process. Breach of this is a failure to comply with God's legal obligations and thus is sin. Biblically – and even in the world, if legal process is not followed, the resultant action is considered void.

Further, failure to comply with God's court order is thus in contempt of court.

Yet some persist that they are above the law, even if it is not in contradiction of God's law. They can say these things to the Police or Magistrates or even perjure themselves and see what happens. Will God back them up?

Refer to the study *What is Justice? The Biblical Requirement for Impartial Judiciaries in the Church*.

Are Ministers inspired like patriarchs and prophets?

Some have gone around claiming that ministers are inspired and elevate themselves to the *same level* as patriarchs, prophets, apostles, high priests or a King David figure. But elders are not at that level. They are elders.

Nothing can be found in Scripture that elders are sort of priests.

As one minister stated publicly (referring to a trainee elder in the audience) that they are attempting to 'be something that they are not'. They attempt to present themselves with an aura of invincibility instead of being with and among the members; yet the Apostle Paul states the role of elders:

> "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith." (2 Corinthians 1:24)

Some prefer to appear as superior beings and talk down to members as if they are nothing or know nothing. Pretending to know about subjects they are not qualified in. Herbert Armstrong attempted to deal with this by the early 1970s.

There do appear to be degrees of inspiration in the Bible, but no way are elders or members anywhere close to the inspiration level of apostles or prophets. Nor did Herbert Armstrong teach that.

Refer to the Bible study *Are Ministers Priests or Elders? Questions and Answers* for further information.

Do 'wining and dining' represent a type of bribery?

Ever wonder why some get so many "opportunities to serve"? It is sometimes to do with being sycophants and crawling to those in positions; or massaging their egos.

While others spend a lot of time 'wining and dining' ministers to be able to gain

favours. This breaks the spirit of the law concerning bribery:

> "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they **shall judge the people with righteous judgment**.
> **You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality**, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.
> **Justice, and only justice, you shall follow**, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 16:18-20)

> "... and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, **for you judge not for man but for the LORD**. He is with you in giving judgment.
> Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or **partiality or taking bribes**." (2 Chronicles 19:6-7) [cp. Colossians 3:23]

> "You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, **but in righteousness shall you judge** your neighbor." (Leviticus 19:15)

> "So David reigned over all Israel, and **he administered justice and equity** to all his people." (1 Chronicles 18:14-15)

> "**Evil men do not understand justice**, but those who seek the LORD understand it completely." (Proverbs 28:5)

> "Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich;
> they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; **they judge not with justice** the cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.
> **Shall I not punish them for these things?** declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" (Jeremiah 5:27-29)

Does the minister spend as much time or more with the poor and suffering as he does with the rich?

Can the Ministry have favourites?

And I don't mean friendships – but have favourites.

Unfortunately, some ministers will not have sign-up lists for various jobs, speakers clubs, work groups (eg to organise socials, good works or outreach) because they prefer to appoint friends and those who are crawlers (known as sycophants) who they will use as spies and enforcers.

> "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. **But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers**." (James 2:8-9)

> "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ **must not show favoritism**." (James 2:1)
>
> "I solemnly command you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and the highest angels to obey these instructions **without taking sides or showing favoritism to anyone**." (1 Timothy 5:21)

In other words, a system must be in place that has a panel to weigh up the evidence without bias or presuppositions and come to a truthful outcome or decision. There is to be no corruption or perjury.

This also leads to a 'tow-tier' system where a minister treats a member they don't like terribly due to slander, jealousy or vindictiveness; and others well due to their operating as sycophants and spies.

Do Ministers have a "double portion" of the spirit?

It is sad that some teach this and actually believe it! They actually believe that they have twice the amount of the holy spirit than the general membership. Apparently this is based on 2 Kings 2:9.

The Bible plainly states that all converted members receive the holy spirit at baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38). Ordination is understood as a setting apart for a specific function and responsibility, not as receiving a larger "quantity" or "double portion" of the spirit of God. UCG literature consistently presents the holy spirit as the same power and presence of God available to all true Christians, with different gifts and roles distributed as God wills (1 Corinthians 12), not as a measurable substance given in double measure to ministers.

This is confirmed in the official *Beyond Today Bible Commentary* on 2 Kings 2. Regarding Elisha's request for a "double portion," the commentary states:

> "Elisha became Elijah's successor, symbolized by the passing of the mantle (2 Kings 2:13-14) and confirmed by the 'double portion' of the power that God gave him through His Spirit… It should be noted that the concept of a 'double portion' in Scripture normally denoted a birthright inheritance of the firstborn son in a family. In that usage, it did not mean twice as much as the father had but, rather, twice as much as the other sons received from the father. It appears that Elisha's request was similar. If this is the case, then Elisha… was asking for twice as much as what they would receive rather than twice as much as what Elijah had."

UCG applies the "double portion" language strictly to prophetic succession and does not extend it into any doctrine that ministers possess twice the holy spirit of lay members. Certain ministers know this, but defy the teachings of their church.

Do only Ministers have spiritual gifts?

The Bible is clear on this as is the UCG. The UCG literature demonstrates that all Christians with the holy spirit have been given a gift or gifts from their Father, yet some ministers do not agree and refuse to go along with this. They will not teach this at all.

Keeping a Holy Convocation. Doctrinal Study Paper. Approved by the Council of Elders May, 2024 states:

> "The fellowship of God's Church is based on the pure revelation of Scripture and is centered on our eternal destiny in His ruling family**. Our fellowship is open and inclusive as we seek the collaborative involvement of every member of the Church for the edification of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16).** The degree to which we each abide in Christ is the degree to which we will abide with one another (John 15:5)." (p. 8) [emphasis mine]

Should we be in fear?

Some ministers have distilled fear in their congregations by tactics such as the following:

- Constantly using Scriptures about "hearing and fearing" God (which means to respect Him and His ways, not humans) as if they are referring to ministers.
- That they are as priests and every imagined resistance to them or not following advice is as if one is rebelling against God Himself.
- Not following due process in regard to serious issues.
- Preference for friends and sycophants.
- Spies in the congregation reporting on members – one never knows what they are saying about one. And the minister believes them.
- Litle 'taps on the shoulder' to see a minister and trying to put people on edge – enjoying the chase like a predator. Bulling and physical touching in that manner are legal offences, let alone being ungodly.
- Brow-beating, shouting and threatening. Verbal abuse or verbal violence is also a legal issue.
- Wrongful excommunications.
- Wrongfully declaration of members to be not in good standing without their knowledge and without recourse.

Notice:

> "Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**, not a drunkard, **not violent but gentle *[including in speech]*, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money *[including high salaries above what is needed]*.**" (1 Timothy 3:2-3)

They cause fear in the congregation and then accuse people in fear of having the wrong attitude and if in fear are holding on to a secret sin. Instead, the causer of fear should be admitting that they have the wrong approach. Never admitting to error or abuse is the order of the day for some.

The Scripture they use to justify their actions is 1 John 4:18, but they take it out of context:

> "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.
> By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.
> There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.
> We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:16-18)

They use fear tactics and then blame the members, misapplying the Scripture above. Strange, but true. Taking a Scripture out of context and using that to cause fear is both dishonest and poor theology.

The context is that of judgment! Simply read the previous verse. We should all fear God, but not man!

> "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
> When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall.
> Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident." (Psalm 27:1-3)
>
> "Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.
> The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?
> The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.
> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.
> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes." (Psalm 118:5-9)
>
> "So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"" (Hebrews 13:6)
>
> "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,
> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

The Bible shows we must fear Him, not men!

These sorts are a law unto themselves and don't care what the Bible teaches or what their own Church teaches or what its policies are. There is certainly nothing shepherding about that.

Why hasn't there been clarity on this subject?

The Churches of God seem to have a tradition of mentioning or addressing some subjects, but only fleetingly. Detailed attention to many subjects, pronouncements or policies seem to be outside of our tradition. Policies and announcements are scattered across articles, sermons and are often not catalogued in a systematic way.

Yet today, it is so easy to assemble information, doctrines and policies coherently. Modern technology makes this ultra-easy.

This neglect has led to misunderstandings, forgetting of decisions/changes or in some circumstances, just ignoring them as well as some forming incorrect conclusions.

Assembling, categorising and systemising our approach has not been among our strengths.

In fact, we have not produced definitive articles and booklets on a range of issues and topics. Announcements are made and forgotten. Trying to remember decisions becomes quite a 'stretch' for most people and so they just don't seem to care about certain matters.



Ministerial Requirements. A Summary with Q & A.

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