

Elder Symposium Report

Elders and Regional Evangelists - Thursday, May 05, 2005

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22 NIV);
"Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise." (Proverbs 19:20 NIV);
"Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice." (Proverbs 13:10 NIV)

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

We are very thankful for the powerful way in which God has been with us here in the LA Church. He has certainly shown us much grace and mercy by making all us a part of such a great spiritual family. 2004 was a time for all of us to examine and affirm our core convictions and deepen our relationship with the Lord. Although we rejoice over every soul converted last year in the Church, we know God desired and expected for there to have been many more [1 Tim 2:4, John 15:4]. This conviction led the elders and evangelists to call the church to a renewed focus on our outreach in 2005 and ask Doug Arthur to come preach a Biblical message calling us back to our God-ordained purpose of seeking and saving the lost at the beginning of this year. The Shrine Auditorium was filled to capacity as the Holy Spirit worked through the preaching and the worship service to challenge, convict, and inspire the entire congregation. It is already evident that many of us have repented and have a passionate zeal to more deeply love God, one another and the lost. We praise God that we already seem to be on a pace of having 50% more souls baptized this year than in 2004. We know that the Lord desires many more souls to be saved in this great metropolis. We pray that we will continue to grow in our impact to this lost world.

Although we are blessed to have 8 brothers who serve as elders here in the LA Church, the elders and regional evangelists also see the need to train and appoint more men to become elders to help shepherd the flock; we plan to begin a specific training program this summer. Because of that, we have been examining the qualifications from the Scriptures and comparing that to what we have traditionally taught and believed; we have been especially in discussion and prayer about the family qualifications in order for a brother to serve as an elder. There is a range of beliefs throughout the brotherhood concerning this issue. With a desire to arrive at the wisest and most Scriptural conclusion, we decided to have a symposium on May 2-3, 2005, where we could solicit and hear the thoughts of other church leaders and scholars whom we respected outside of LA. We invited the following brothers to come to LA to make presentations concerning their convictions and opinions on this family qualification issue: Gordon Ferguson (elder/evangelist, Phoenix), Steve Staten (elder/evangelist, Chicago), Ron Brumley (elder, Seattle), Wyndham Shaw (elder/evangelist, Boston) and Douglas Jacoby (teacher, Athens, Ga.). (We also invited Sam Laing and Kip McKean, but both were unable to attend because of other commitments) We also heard a presentation from our own Andy Fleming (evangelist, LA). In addition to the elders and regional evangelists (and their wives), we invited all of the ministers of the LA Church from each sector as well as the evangelists and elders from the San Diego Church. It was an incredibly refreshing period of prayer, study, dialogue and fellowship.

At this symposium, we opened the session with extended prayer; we then heard each brother make his presentation and answer questions concerning their presentation. Their insights and thoughts were diverse, but incredibly valuable. We deeply appreciated their willingness to come join us for this important discussion. Following this symposium, the LA elders and regional evangelists met together for an additional time of prayer and discussion about our convictions. We will be having a time of fasting and prayer from Tuesday, May 10th at 1 p.m. to Wednesday, May 11th at 1 p.m. We will meet on Wednesday, May 11th for follow-up discussions and to reach a consensus on our conclusions. We will be communicating these conclusions and providing instruction to the entire LA congregation within several weeks. Please keep us in your prayers.

Elders and Regional Evangelists
Los Angeles International Church of Christ

