

MUST ELDERS EXPLAIN THEIR DECISIONS TO THE CHURCH?

Dear Bro. Waddey: Our elders recently dismissed our preacher. He has served us well for over 20 years. They have given no explanation for their decision and they have forbidden him to discuss the matter. This seems very wrong and unfair to me and others. What are your thoughts on this matter? Harold

Dear Bro. Harold: Thank you for writing. I regret to hear of the heartache and confusion the dismissal of your preacher has caused.

Elders as overseers of the flock have the right to employ a preacher and they have the right to dismiss him and seek a new one. That is the very meaning of bishop (overseer) (I Tim. 3:1). Such decisions should always be for the edification or benefit of the church (I Cor. 14:26). But to say the least, it is bad policy for an eldership to refuse to discuss and/or explain why they have taken such action. They do not own the church. They are warned against lording it over the flock (I Pet. 5:3). To operate in this fashion creates the suspicion that they have not acted properly or that they have something to hide.

It is sometimes the case that there are embarrassing factors involved in the dismissal. To minimize the hurt and embarrassment to the preacher, his family and the church, the elders prefer to limit discussion about the matter.

You as a member have every right to approach them in a respectful way and ask for an explanation of their decision. Church membership is a voluntary thing. I choose to be a member of a congregation and support it with my gifts and labor. I can also choose not to continue my membership and/or my contributions. Elders should always keep this fact in mind as they make their decisions.

JHW