



OURC Elder Orientation & Training

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Session #1: The Biblical Basics of the Elder—Rev. Danny Hyde	2
Session #2: Overcoming the Fear of Serving—Dr. Stephen Hobson	6
Session #3: Time Management of Life When Serving—Arlan Memmelaar	7
Session #4: Practical Tools for Service—Henry Doorn	8
Select Bibliography	9

The Biblical Basics of the Elder

Rev. Danny Hyde, Pastor

Session #1

The *Idea* of “Offices” in the Church

From the Latin, *officium* (“work”)—an official, appointed task with special duties and dignity

1. *Office in the Old Testament*
2. *Office in the New Testament*
3. *How Do the Old and New Offices Relate?*

The *Nature* of the Office of Elder

Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons (*Psalter Hymnal*, pp. 173–175)

The *Qualifications* for the Office of Elder

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 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.

Internal Desire (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2)

External Demonstration:

1. *The elder must be above reproach in his family life* (vv. 2, 4, 5)
 - “The husband of one wife”—not a bigamist or polygamist; a male (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11–15; Titus 1; 1 Cor. 14:34–35; Church Order, art. 12).
 - He must also manage his home well—his children must be “submissive,” or, “under control” (NASB) because the home is a microcosm of the household of God. If he cannot oversee his own house, how can he oversee God’s?
2. *The elder must be gifted with the ability to rule and oversee* (vv. 4, 5 cf. Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

- Since the office of elder is an office of rule, we need to look for those men who are gifted by God to rule (Rom. 12:8) and to govern/administer affairs in the church (1 Cor. 12:28).
3. *The elder must be above reproach in his character* (vv. 2, 3, 6)
 - Contrast: the **godly** character of being sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and gentle with the **ungodly** character of being a drunkard, violent, quarrelsome, and a lover of money.
 - He also points out an apt qualification for he who will rule the church: he must not be a recent convert (Greek, *neophuton*; “newly planted”), or else he may be puffed up with conceit and together with the Devil fall into condemnation.
 4. *The elder must be above reproach among the world* (v. 7)
 - As one who rules God’s house, which is in the world although not of the world, he must be regarded highly by outsiders.
 - The witness of the Church to the world is always on the mind of the elder, lest he fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.
 5. *The elder must be a man of wisdom* (Ex. 18; Acts 15; 1 Cor. 6)
 - Ex. 18—The elders were to be men of wisdom in judging disputes among the people of God. Moses chose from the people “able men...who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe...and let them judge” (Ex. 18:21, 22).
 - Acts 15—At the Jerusalem Council the elders joined the apostles
 - 1 Corinthians 6—There was an over-abundance of gifts centered in the Word (prophecy, tongues, words of wisdom and knowledge). In that situation there was a vacuum of order and leadership by applying the Word to real problems. Many of the ordinary gifts such as government/administration of the church were not given their proper place. This is why when rebuking them for the abundance of lawsuits amongst the brethren before the secular magistrate, Paul says, “Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers... (1 Cor. 6:5).
 - Although elders are not gifted as the Church’s teachers, but to rule, they are to do so *according to the Word*. In what else than the Word are the elders to be wise?

The Duties of the Office of Elder

Church Order, article 14:

The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in prayer and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centered schooling, visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, exercise discipline in the congregation, actively promote the work of evangelism and missions, and insure that everything is done decently and in good order.

For an excellent audio discussion of this, listen to:

<http://info.alliancenet.org/mos/podcast/ordinary-men>

The Elders' Purpose

“...that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced.”

The Elders' General Duties

1. *Prayer*

2. *Rule*

The Elders' Specific Duties

1. *Oversee all office-bearers: “see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices.”*
 - The elders hold the *office* of elder, have the *task* of overseer, and are to have the *character* of a shepherd.
 - Some questions the elders need to ask in overseeing the minister are these: Is the pastor faithfully preaching the Word? How can I free him from administrative tasks so he can pray, study, and visit? Is the flock growing in knowledge and piety?
 - Some questions the elders need to ask in overseeing the deacons are these: Are the deacons aware of benevolent needs in the congregation? Are they serving the pastor, also, by assisting him in daily administrative tasks? Are they visiting those in need regularly, praying and encouraging them with Scripture?
 - See Carl Trueman: <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2014/01/a-few-good-men-not-a-few-good.php>
2. *Maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments*
 - By knowing the Word (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - By defending the church from enemies outside the church (“Savage wolves will come in among you,” Acts 20:29) and from enemies inside the church (“From among yourselves men will rise up,” Acts 20:30).
3. *Assist in catechizing the youth*
4. *Promote God-centered schooling*
 - While education is primarily the sphere of parents, the church is also involved as it seeks to see its members applying the Word of God in all areas of life.
 - In our diverse congregation we need to encourage parents to be involved in their children’s education by applying the Reformed Faith, whether their children attend a Christian school, are home schooled, attend a public charter school, or the public school.
5. *Visit those in need*
 - E.g., the sick, hospitalized, or mourning

6. *Family visitation (cf. Henry's session)*

7. *Exercise discipline*
 - Discipline is a ministry of reconciliation (cf. Matt. 18:12–14; Luke 15; 2 Cor. 5) and restoration (cf. John 21:15–17; Acts 9; Phil. 15–17)
 - Praying for those under discipline to be restored
 - Prepared with the mindset that discipline is long, painful, and difficult work
 - Learning tact and boldness in the interpersonal relationships that are involved with discipline
 - Sin should never come as a surprise to us, no matter whose sin it is or what sin it is

8. *Actively promote the work of evangelism and missions*
 - In your personal life
 - In the congregation (e.g., inviting missionaries to preach and present their work)

9. *Ensure that everything is done decently and in good order*

Overcoming the Fear of Serving

Dr. Stephen Hobson

Session #2

Time Management of Life when Serving
Arlan Memmelaar
Session #3

Practical Tools for Service

Henry Doorn

Session #4

Select Bibliography

All these are available for borrowing on the bookshelf in our storage closet.

Elder:

Taking Heed to the Flock: A Study of the Principles and Practice of Family Visitation, by Peter Y. de Jong

The Elder: Today's Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture, by Cornelis Van Dam

The Elders Handbook: A Practical Guide for Church Leaders, by Gerad Berghoef, Lester DeKoster

With a Shepherd's Heart: Reclaiming the Pastoral Office of Elder, by John R. Sittema

Deacon:

Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road, by Timothy J. Keller

The Deacons Handbook: A Manual of Stewardship, by Gerad Berghoef, Lester DeKoster

The Ministry of Mercy for Today, by Peter Y. De Jong

Elder & Deacon:

Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons, edited by Michael Brown

Handbook for Elders and Deacons, by William Heyns

Church Polity:

The Church Order Commentary, by Idzerd Van Dellen and Martin Monsma (1941 edition; reprinted by Credo Books, 2003)