THE SHEPHERDS INSTITUTE: A TRAINING PROCESS FOR

ASPIRING ELDERS AT CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

IN GRIDLEY, ILLINOIS

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

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by

Andrew Kevin Huette

December 2017

APPROVAL SHEET

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ASPIRING ELDERS AT CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH
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Read and Approved by:

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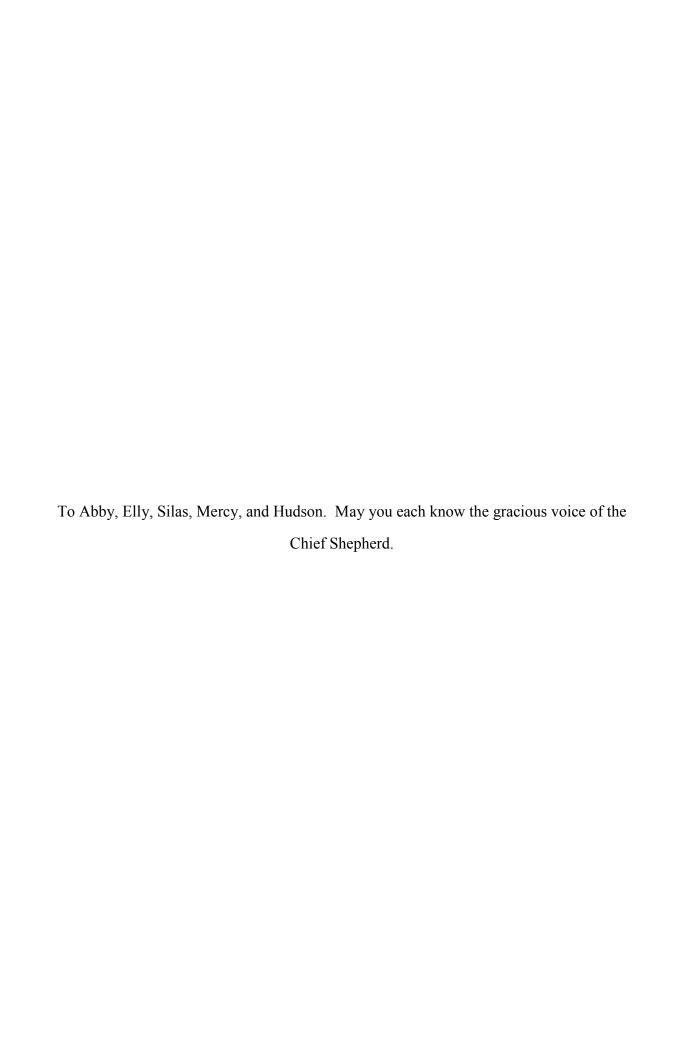Robert L. Plummer (Faculty Supervisor)

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Gregg R. Allison

Date_____

To Abby, Elly, Silas, Mercy, and Hudson. May you each know the gracious voice of the

Chief Shepherd.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NTL	New Testament Library
NTR	New Testament Readings
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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PREFACE

Ministry is a team sport. Not only is it spiritually dangerous for a pastor to work alone without the encouragement and accountability of co-laborers, but it is also impossible for a single, finite human to do all that is necessary for the edification of the local church. This inability is not the fault of any man, but is the deliberate plan of God. In wisdom, God diversified gifts to the church and made his church a body in which the contribution of many individual parts is necessary for the functionality of the whole. Additionally, he has designed pastoral ministry to be a shared endeavor in which a plurality of uniquely gifted pastor-elders work together to lovingly lead the flock.

At Christ Community Church, I have experienced the grace of God through his provision of numerous co-laborers in ministry over the past decade. Many have exemplified joyful, willing service in the Body of Christ. I give thanks for the unity of the elders and the friendship of each of those with whom I have led. Keri Hany not only has excelled as an administrative assistant, but has also been a source of constant prayer and wisdom in my life. I praise God for his gift of a Jonathan-like friend in Grant Stauter, who is a continual example to me of faith, humility, and a pastor's heart. I am also extremely thankful for the love and encouragement of my parents, Kevin and Toni, who have provided for my education by first teaching me the ways of the Lord as a child as well as generously supplying my needs for seminary study. I also give thanks to God for the opportunity to learn under professors at Southern Seminary who are not only skilled theologians, but pastor-theologians who love Christ's church. Particularly, my advisor Dr. Robert Plummer has been a source of much encouragement in my studies and has been a *tupos* worthy of imitation.

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My wife, Abby, has sincerely blessed me in ministry and my pursuit of theological education. I cannot recall a single instance in which she has bemoaned the many hours of seminary which culminate in this work. She is a perpetual joy in my life, a shepherd to the souls of our children, and a lover of Christ and the church. I may get a diploma that says "Doctor of Ministry," but she has worked harder and learned more about pastoral ministry in the glorious trenches of our home than I have in the theological stacks at the library.

Finally, this work has meaning only because of the work of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his flock. Risen and ascended to glory, he remains the Chief Shepherd of the church, and it is under his oversight and tender care that all true labor in ministry is accomplished. Apart from him, this work is in vain. But through the power of Christ, I pray that a long line of righteous under-shepherds will be called, trained, and enlisted into the work of ministry.

<div align="right">Andy Huette</div>

Gridley, Illinois

December 2017

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"We need to raise up more leaders."

"If only we could mentor more 'Timothy's.'"

"We cannot forget to invest in the future leadership of the church."

Such buzzword-laden phrases bounce around church conference room walls while busy church leaders cast not-so-inconspicuous glances at the clock on the wall. Many well-intended church leaders talk about the primacy of training up more leaders for pastoral ministry, but when the urgency of real life happens—when there are emails to answer, life crises among the flock, sermons to prepare, and diapers to change at home—investing in future leadership is often nothing more than wishful thinking. When fires are burning, taking time to train more firemen seems inconceivable.

But the fires, or rather, the necessary and worthwhile labor of pastoring the flock of God, will not wane this side of glory. Therefore, the wise church prioritizes the necessary over the urgent by training shepherd-leaders. At Christ Community Church (CCC), the time was long overdue for an articulated plan to multiply skillful shepherd leaders. Thus, the purpose of this project was to create a training process for aspiring elders by which men could grow in Christ-like character, biblical knowledge, and practical ministry competency through instruction, assignments, evaluation, and hands-on ministry experiences.

Context

Christ Community Church is the offspring of a peculiar ecclesiastical marriage. In 1981, Gridley United Methodist Church and Union Congregational Church yoked together to become First United Church of Gridley. The two churches were

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sharing a pastor, many congregants were friends, and it made fiscal sense in a small town of 1,400 for the two churches to rally around essential Christian doctrine, pool resources, and join together for the sake of the gospel. A constitution was drafted, a new building was built, and the honeymoon phase officially began.

When times are good, no one seems to care about church polity. In 1981, the incongruities of Methodist polity and congregationalism were irrelevant compared to the excitement of a new building and the launching of a new church. A hybrid church governance structure was drafted and formalized in the new church constitution, and the document was put in a file cabinet for a few decades. But when the church leadership council asked a generally well-liked pastor to resign in 2006, almost every church member dusted off their copy of the church constitution to see who had authority to do what. At the time, the church was led by a seven-member leadership council as well as five ministry teams, each with a specified number of chairs to be filled on the team. Each January at the annual meeting, a nominating team would recommend a slate of names for a rubber stamp of approval to fill the church offices. If vacancies remained, nominations could be made on-the-spot during the meeting and approved with an immediate vote of approval. Many faithful believers served the church within this governance framework; however, biblical qualifications for church leaders were not carefully examined, the turnover of officers was a hindrance to formulating long-term vision, and the lack of training for lay leaders promoted the notion that only the paid pastor does the *real* ministry. Lay leaders were appreciated, but not expected or deemed qualified to participate in shepherding the flock.

The church leadership council had the authority—on paper—to ask for the senior pastor's resignation in 2006, but they did not have the trust of the flock that comes through biblical shepherding. In hindsight, it is evident that in 2006 the Lord was painfully revealing the church's need to conform to the biblical pattern of being led by a plurality of qualified elders. Since that time, a slow but tangible work of the Word and

Spirit has occurred in the church to bring about a more biblical form of church governance and leadership. In January 2015, the church voted not only to switch the church name from "First United Church" to "Christ Community Church" in order to more accurately reflect its nondenominational identity, but also (and more importantly) to approve a new church constitution in which the offices of elder and deacon were established and detailed. The task of moving from the written concept of plural elder-led congregationalism to the reality of training men who are qualified and zealous for the task of shepherding the flock is now underway. The newly instituted office of elder begs for definition not merely with words from the pulpit, but through the example of flesh and blood shepherds who exhibit Christ-like character, who are able to teach, and who shepherd with eagerness.

At least three additional realities at Christ Community Church make training elders an urgent priority. First, the church has experienced substantial numerical growth in recent years as the average Sunday morning attendance in 2016 was 356, up from 160 in 2006.[1] This surge in attendance has also resulted in increased membership bringing with it greater pastoral responsibility which necessitates more shepherds. Second, among the new attenders and members have been a substantial number of Christians who have transferred from other churches. The influx of relatively mature believers represents an opportunity to train pastoral leaders, church planters, and evangelists in order that the church may have a greater evangelical impact in the surrounding communities. To neglect the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry is not only unfaithful ministry, but also a squandering of the Lord's rich entrustment of human resources to Christ Community Church. Third, the shared vision by current church staff and elders is to pursue church planting efforts in nearby small towns which have similar demographics to Gridley. Many small farming communities once had multiple thriving churches, but

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[1]Keri Hany, Administrative Assistant at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois, memorandum to the pastor, November 21, 2016.

few are growing today. With most church planting efforts focused on cities, there is great need for church planting and renewal in rural communities. Training elders is a needed first step in order to prepare men to lead the church with a vision of church planting as well to send out qualified shepherds to plant new churches in surrounding communities.

Rationale

The basis for creating an elder training process at this point in the history of Christ Community Church can be summed up in two words: *need* and *opportunity*. The increased number of regular attenders and members escalates the need for pastoral leadership. The pastors "must give an account" (Heb 13:7)[3] for more sheep, and a larger flock requires more delegation of ministry responsibilities to competent, trustworthy co-laborers. Additionally, the fact that the office of elder is new to the church as of 2015, makes training men who will serve as elders a pressing necessity. Regardless of whether training exists, elders will be installed to fill the office. Without training to biblically define the role of elders, it is likely that the new elders will be prone to define their role by past church leadership experiences, the opinions of the congregation, or other leadership frameworks which miss the mark of faithful shepherding.

The lack of precedent for the office of elder should not be seen as a problem, but as a time-sensitive opportunity for Christ Community Church. With no current elders, a blank canvas exists upon which the first appointed elders will paint a picture with their actions. For better or worse, the role, character, and expectations of the office will be formulated by the men who are chosen to serve. Training aspiring elders for the office is a means of making the most of the current opportunity. A second present opportunity, which beckons for an elder training process, arises from the composition of the congregation. A number of potential elder candidates are actively involved in the life of the church. In May of 2015, church members were asked to prayerfully nominate men

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[3]All Scripture references taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

whom they believed were qualified to serve as elders. This nomination process yielded twenty-six nominees. In addition to these twenty-six, one could certainly find another dozen men in the church interested in elder training for future service in the church. The Lord has graciously supplied the raw material for a strong eldership to be built. Third, "the harvest is plentiful" as the Lord said, "but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2) for evangelism and church planting. Christ commanded his followers to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest field, and praying for such laborers remains a central calling of the church. Yet, in addition to praying for workers, the Bible contains an implicit command for the church to train, affirm, and send out laborers whom the Lord has graciously provided. The Body of Christ is called to make disciples of all nations and the Lord has given Christ Community Church laborers for such a purpose. Now it is imperative to diligently train elders to lead the way in the external call of church planting and gospel proclamation.

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to create a training process for aspiring elders by which men could grow in Christ-like character, biblical knowledge, and practical ministry competency through instruction, assignments, evaluation, and hands-on ministry experience.

Goals

An elder must exhibit character that is above reproach, have the ability to teach true biblical doctrine, and demonstrate pastoral competency to wisely manage those under his care. Simply put, elder training must address a man's heart (character), head (knowledge), and hands (practical pastoral skill). To this end, the Shepherds Institute sought to train prospective elders by accomplishing five goals:

1. The first goal was to identify and enlist ten participants in the Shepherds Institute.

2.   The second goal was to develop curriculum to train aspiring elders.

3.   The third goal was to increase Christ-like character development among the participants.

4.   The fourth goal was to increase biblical knowledge of the participants in order to foster a biblical foundation for ministry practices.

5.   The fifth goal was to equip participants for pastoral work as elders.

The Shepherds Institute, a repeatable means of training elders, was established to accomplish these five goals. As the Shepherds Institute is repeated annually at the church, some students may come to realize that eldership is no longer their calling, others may find they need to mature in particular ways before pursing the office, and others may be encouraged to pursue a pastoral calling at Christi Community Church.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to identify and enlist participants in the Shepherds Institute. The council of elders prayed, discussed, and worked together to nominate participants for the Shepherds Institute.[4] This goal was measured by accumulating a list of prospective students in conjunction with the elders. From this list, ten men were identified and invited to participate.[5] Alternate nominees were identified in case any of the initial ten

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[4]One could argue that if the elders identify potential participants for the Shepherds Institute, the participants may be called by man and not by God, thus, short-cutting the biblical requirement that an elder must aspire to the task. However, there are two reasons it is best for the elders to identify participants. First, because the elder training process is long overdue at CCC, there is a backlog of men who have already expressed aspiration to grow in pastoral ministry. It would be foolish to unnecessarily create a situation in which applicants are rejected when there is already a queue ready and waiting for training. Secondly, aspiring to the office of elder is not solely a personal decision. In addition to an internal calling, one's call ought to be externally confirmed by the elders of the church. The internal call need not precede the external call. For some participants, the elders' invitation to be trained may be the first step in the Lord's process of calling them into the work of pastoral ministry.

[5]See appendix 1. All research instruments were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

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nominees declined to participate. This goal was considered successfully met when ten

men committed to participate.[6]

The second goal was to develop curriculum for the Shepherds Institute by

which aspiring elders could be trained in pastoral ministry. The curriculum was arranged

into nine class sessions met once a month with pre and post-class assignments. Each

class met for two hours and consisted of group discussion about the readings and

workbook questions as well as an emphasis on applying the content to real-life ministry

scenarios. The topics covered in the curriculum were (1) the character of the elder, (2)

private and public prayer, (3) expository preaching, (4) plural elder-led

congregationalism, (5) church membership and discipline, (6) the ordinances, (7) gender

roles, (8) evangelism and mission, and (9) discipleship. This goal was measured by an

expert panel of three seminary-trained individuals with doctoral degrees. The panel

utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and

applicability of the curriculum.[7] This goal was considered successfully met when a

minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase Christ-like character development among the

participants. The goal was measured through a character self-assessment,[8] character

assessment by the participant's spouse (or friend, if unmarried),[9] character assessment

interview[10] with the Shepherds Institute instructor to develop a character formation

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[6]Since one of the ten students in the Shepherds Institute already had an accountability relationship with another prospective elder in the church, an additional invitation was extended to an eleventh participant, who agreed to join the Shepherds Institute.

[7]See appendix 2.

[8]See appendix 3.

[9]See appendix 4.

[10]See appendix 5.

plan,[11] and through a post-character formation plan evaluation rubric.[12] In the first month of implementation, participants were required to complete both character assessments and to identify at least one targeted area of growth (hereafter TAG). Participants then developed a written character formation plan, which included means the participant employed to grow in Christ-like character, in addition to the participants' semi-monthly accountability meetings. After the nine month course, participants completed the post-character formation plan evaluation rubric. This goal would be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the post-character formation plan evaluation rubric criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The fourth goal was to increase biblical knowledge of the participants in order to foster a biblical foundation for ministry practices at Christ Community Church. The goal was measured by administering a pre and post-test to assess the change in biblical knowledge.[14] This goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post-test survey scores. A t-test for dependent samples was used because the research compares the pre-test and post-test scores of the same participants.[15]

The fifth goal was to equip participants for pastoral work as elders. Each lesson in the Shepherds Institute curriculum concluded with hands-on assignments pertaining to pastoral competencies of elders. This goal was measured by a rubric[16] evaluating the completion of three pastoral field experience (hereafter PFE) assignments by each participant.[17] The first PFE assignment was to complete a sermon evaluation

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[11]See appendix 6.

[12]See appendix 7.

[14]See appendix 8.

[15]Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics,* 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 199-216.

[16]See appendix 9.

[17]See appendix 10.

rubric and discuss the review at a Shepherds Institute meeting or with a CCC pastor.[18]

The second PFE assignment was to attend an elders meeting and write a one-page review

of the meeting. The third assignment was to schedule and make a pastoral visit after first

accompanying and observing a CCC pastor on a pastoral visit. The participant then

wrote a brief review of his pastoral visit. This goal would be considered successfully met

when all students had scored at the sufficient level or repeated the assignment and gained

proficiency.

<div align="center">**Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations**</div>

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project: elder,

elder-led congregationalism, and plurality.

Elder. An elder is one who serves in the office of pastor as one member of the

plurality of overseers in a local church under the authority of the Head of the Church,

Jesus Christ. The term "elder" is used interchangeably with the terms "pastor" and

"overseer" in the New Testament.[19] The role of an elder is to "shepherd, oversee, lead,

and care for the local church."[20] An elder must evidence godly character and live a life

that is above reproach to be qualified for office.

Elder-led congregationalism. Congregationalism is the form of church polity

in which "the power of government and the right of regulating all the church's affairs are

vested in the body of members, not in the office-bearers of the church."[21] In elder-led

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[18]See sermon evaluation rubric in Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search: Biblical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 128-31.

[19]Hamilton cites Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-2; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Tim 3:1-7; Phil 1:1; and Jas 5:14 to show that all three terms refer to the same office. James M. Hamilton Jr., "Did the Church Borrow Leadership Structures from the Old Testament or Synagogue?" in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 13. See also Benjamin L. Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

[20]Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 17.

[21]Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 3rd ed. (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 108.

congregationalism, both the congregation and the elders exercise authority in differing spheres. The congregation has the authority to elect those who will serve as the overseers of the church and in turn submits to the overseers (Heb 13:7). The elders exercise authority over the flock (1 Pet 5:2), yet the congregation still retains authority to remove elders should the elders abandon fidelity to the Word of God, thus forfeiting their authority to lead.[22]

Plurality. Plurality simply means "more than one." In this project, the term "plurality" was used in reference to the elders of the local church because, as Wayne Grudem concludes, "There is quite a consistent pattern of *plural elders* as the main governing group in the New Testament churches."[23] Though elders equally share authority to lead, each elder is gifted differently by the Lord which results in functional diversity in the way that elders work together to shepherd the flock.

Two limitations applied to this project. First, Christ-like character development which was fostered through semi-monthly accountability meetings of participants was dependent upon the willingness of the participants to be honest about their struggles with sin as well as their own limited self-perception. The depth of relationship between participants, the vulnerability expressed by each involved, and the graciousness exemplified by participants contributed to the effectiveness of accountability meetings. To mitigate this limitation, participants were able to choose their accountability partner(s) so that they could establish a rhythm of accountability with those whom they trust. Second, hands-on pastoral field experiences involving participant observation were limited by the presence of the observing participant. The mere presence of an observing participant may limit the authenticity of the field experience in that some

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[22]Erickson refers to elder-led congregationalism as a "representative democracy" adding that "certain persons are elected by a free choice of the members of the body to serve in special ways. They are representatives and servants of the church, answerable to those who have chosen them." Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1000.

[23]Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 912.

information which would otherwise be shared in a meeting or personal conversation with a church member may be withheld. To mitigate this limitation, an explanation of the purpose of the participant's observation was given to any human subjects involved in a field experience with the assurance that the observing participant could be excused if the subject desired confidentiality.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was limited to ten participants aspiring to office of elder or who considered the desire to serve as an elder a future probability. Capping the enrollment at ten participants was intended to ensure that each had the opportunity to participate in discussion as well as to receive adequate oversight and feedback from field experiences.[24] Second, the project was confined to a nine-month timeframe (congruent with the school year). In these nine months, both character assessment surveys, a character assessment interview, a character formation plan, a post-character formation plan evaluation, pre and post-biblical knowledge surveys, nine classroom sessions, and three pastoral field experience assignments were completed by each participant.

Conclusion

Unprecedented need and opportunity exists at Christ Community Church of Gridley to train elders who can wisely shepherd the flock and lead the church in its mission. A lack of intentionality in identifying, training, and evaluating elders would leave the church unfaithful to Scripture which calls for the church to be led by qualified elders. Moreover, failing to train the future leaders of the church is pastoral negligence in the present. The Shepherds Institute is a means not only to meet current leadership needs but to mature skilled, godly elders for many years to come.

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[24]The aforementioned addition of an eleventh participant did not skew the intent of this delimitation.

CHAPTER 2

WORTHY OF IMITATION

In Matthew 23, Jesus warns a crowd about the hypocrisy of their supposed

spiritual leaders—the scribes and Pharisees. With prophetic indignation, he declares,

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they
> tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie
> up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they
> themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. (Matt 23:2-4)

Jesus' word of rebuke to the hypocrites was a word of caution to the crowds; for students

learn not only by what is said, but also by what is seen. Jesus was directing his hearers to

distinguish between the sacred truth spoken by the scribes and Pharisees and the

abhorrent instruction of their conduct.

When teaching others the truth of Scripture—a duty of all elders in the local

church—it is imperative for the health of the church that elders are qualified to teach

through both verbal communication of sound doctrine and through a godly manner of

life. One who can articulate the Law of Moses with eloquent precision, but whose

manner of life is not worthy of imitation walks the hypocritical path of the first-century

scribes and Pharisees and is not qualified for eldership. An examination of (1) the way

Jesus taught his disciples, (2) Paul's hortatory use of his own pattern of life, and (3) the

philosophy of pastoral ministry articulated in the Pastoral Epistles shows that elders must

be able to teach through verbal communication of sound doctrine *and* by exemplifying a

pattern of life that is worthy of imitation.

More Than Words

Somewhat surprisingly, Paul specifies only two required competencies for

elders in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7.[1] Elders must be capable managers of their

own households and the church, and they must be "able to teach" (1 Tim 3:2).[2] The

remainder of the qualifications focus on the character of elders and are qualities that

should be evident in the lives of all Christians.[3] Given the context of the Pastoral

Epistles, with the ever-present threat of false teachers in Ephesus and Crete, apt teachers

were necessary to verbally confront falsehood with the knowledge of the truth. Thus,

when Paul specifies that an elder must be "able to teach," he is referring to the ability to

verbally instruct others in the truth of Christ.

The theme of teaching sound doctrine looms large in all three Pastoral Epistles.

In 1 Timothy, Timothy's task of stewarding true doctrine and guarding against false

teaching form a thematic *inclusio* in the body of the letter in 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and 6:20-

21. Second Timothy, likewise, accentuates sound teaching with exhortations for Timothy

to "follow the pattern of the sounds words" that he heard from Paul (1:13), to entrust

sound doctrine to "faithful men who will be able to teach others" (2:2), to be a worker

"rightly handling the word of truth" (2:15),[4] to "preach the word . . . reprove, rebuke, and

exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (4:2), and to "do the work of an evangelist"

(4:5). Additionally, Paul opens his letter to Titus stipulating that an elder "must hold firm

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[1]The term *episkopos* is used in 1 Tim 3:1-2 and Titus 1:7, but *presbuteros* is used in Titus 1:5 to describe the same office.

[2]Though an unmarried man does not manage a household (i.e. a family), his competency as a faithful manager may be ascertained through other means such as his managerial competency in his vocation or in a church ministry.

[3]In regard to the qualifications lists for elders, Carson states, "Almost every entry is mandated elsewhere of *all* believers." D. A. Carson, "Church, Authority in the," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 249.

[4]"Rightly handling" (from the NT hapax *orthotomeō*), literally means "to cut straight" and is used to give a word picture of the effect of sound teaching. The false teachers do not rightly divide the Word, which leads to gangrene (2 Tim 2:17), a metaphor for spiritual sickness and death. Timothy is to divide the word carefully like a straight-cutting surgeon, which produces healing and health.

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" (Titus 1:9). Towner notes that Titus 1:9 introduces "the two categories that organize the rest of the letter,"[5] namely instruction in the truth and refutation of false teaching. Collins adds,

> Epictecus said that the philosopher has a double responsibility with regard to the truth. He must teach it and he must defend it. Similarly, the Pastor says that the overseer has a double responsibility with regard to the faithful word (see 2 Tim. 4:2-3). He is to cling to it so that he is capable of exhorting the faithful and correcting opponents.[6]

Though the elder's ability to teach is only mentioned briefly in the qualification lists of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, the insistence on sound teaching is strong throughout the remainder of the Pastoral Epistles. The emphasis on teaching in the Pastoral Epistles leaves little doubt that a qualified elder must know, cling to, and be able to verbally communicate the truth for the edification and the protection of the church. An elder who cannot "communicate and apply the truth of Scripture with clarity, coherence, and fruitfulness"[7] is not fit for the office.

The ability to verbally communicate sound doctrine is necessary for church elders, but it is *not sufficient* for a man to be qualified to teach in the church. Both Scripture and common human experience reveal that teaching is not limited to verbal communication. Newton and Schmucker explain, "The elder doesn't always need to have his mouth or his Bible open, formally instructing a group of people. His example as he lives in true biblical fashion *is* instruction."[8] Truly, it is often the elder's actions—his

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[5]Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 691.

[6]Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 326.

[7]Thabiti M. Anyawible, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 78.

[8]Phil A. Newton and Matt Schmucker, *Elders in the Life of the Church: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 158.

character in times of suffering, his demeanor in the bleachers at a high school football game, and his attitude as he serves at the church—which offer far more valuable instruction than his exegetical insight shared in Sunday School. Therefore, a man's biblical knowledge, his charismatic teaching capability, or his academic accomplishments do not qualify him for the teaching office of elder. Rather, his way of life—his *tupos* ("example") in Paul's terminology—must also be examined in order that his actions as well as his words convey the truth of Christ and are worthy of congregational imitation.

The pedagogical method of Jesus is predicated on the fact that people learn from observing the actions of others. Jesus adopted the common first-century educational model of apprenticeship by inviting students to join him for on-the-job training with the two simple yet demanding words: "Follow me."[9]

The apprenticeship model of education was well established in the first-century and was practiced by Jews and Gentiles alike. It was assumed that students "could learn from [their teacher] in two ways. His teachings provided one method of learning. Watching him live . . . provided the other."[10] Seneca, the famed Roman philosopher and contemporary of Christ, wrote of the value of learning "not from men who pour forth their words . . . but men who teach us by their lives."[11] In another letter, Seneca argues that the example of one's life is a more effective tutor than one's written work:

> For the living voice and the intimacy of a common life will help you more than the written word. You must go to the scene of the action, first because men put more

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[9]Jesus was unconventional, however, in that "there are no rabbinical stories analogous to the calling of the disciples, for rabbis did not consummate the teacher-student relationship by the summons, 'Follow me.' Unlike the decisive call that comes from Jesus, entry into a rabbinical school depended on the initiative of the aspiring student, not the call of the rabbi." James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 49.

[10]Kenneth Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 152.

[11]Lucius Anæus Seneca, *Epistle 52*, 52.8, quoted in Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB, vol. 32B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 83.

faith in their eyes than in their ears, and second, because the way is long if one follows precepts, but short and helpful if one follows examples.[12]

Jewish rabbis, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, also utilized an apprenticeship model of education. After a young man had gained proficiency in the Torah, he could seek out a formal apprenticeship with a rabbi. The pupil would attempt to learn "how his teacher thought and acted in every imaginable circumstance" because "the goal in rabbinic discipleship was to turn oneself into a close replica of one's teacher."[13] One rabbi from the Maccabean era memorably explained the closeness with which disciples were to follow their rabbis when he said, "Become dirty in the dust of [your rabbi's] feet."[14] The objective of discipleship was not the accumulation of data for the purpose of intellectual assent. Rather, disciples sought to learn a life of wisdom by holistic observation and emulation of those whose lives bore the desirable fruit of their words.

The disciples may have been ignorant of what following Jesus would entail when they committed to follow *him*, but they were not unaware of the demands of rabbinical discipleship. When they dropped their fishing nets, they knew—based on the common practice of other rabbis and their followers—that Jesus was calling them to be dusted in the soil of his footsteps, to learn from his way of life, and to imitate him in the miniscule details of daily living.[15]

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[12]Seneca, *Epistle 6*, 6.5-6, quoted in Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, 83.

[13]Robert Goldenberg, "Religious Formation in Ancient Judaism," in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 40.

[14]Yose ben Yoezer, *Pirkei Avot* 1:4, accessed November 21, 2016, http://www.sefaria.org /Pirkei_Avot.1.1?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en.

[15]Peter's words to the church underscore Jesus' intent to educate by example. In 1 Pet 2:21, he writes, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."

In addition to the fact that Jesus called disciples to follow him, specific passages in the Gospels show that Jesus viewed his actions to be an instrument of instruction for his disciples. John 13 and Luke 6 contain particularly clear references to Jesus' method of teaching by example.

In John 13, Jesus takes off his outer garment during the Passover meal with his disciples, wraps a towel around his waist, and begins to wash the feet of his disciples. Peter, indignant that the Christ stoops to such a humble position, refuses the Lord's service. But Jesus insists, saying, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand" (John 13:7). Peter's ignorance—his need to learn something about this unusual act—is established, as is Jesus' intent to instruct Peter of the significance of the foot-washing. A few verses later, in John 13:14-15, Jesus concludes washing his disciples' feet and explains,

> Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

What Peter (and presumably the other disciples) did not understand, Jesus makes clear. Though he is their authoritative Lord and Teacher, he empties himself of privilege and humbly serves. This is not a mere object lesson, but actual humiliation as Jesus breaks the cultural norms based on honor and shame. Jesus' act of washing his pupils' feet brings definition to his words later that evening, "Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). The disciples have seen the example of their rabbi and others will know who their rabbi is to the degree that they emulate his humble, self-giving action. Jesus gave his disciples understanding—he taught them—through his actions as well as his words.

Luke 6:40 provides another instance in the Gospels where Jesus' paradigm of teaching by example is on display. Luke records, "He also told them a parable: 'Can a

blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." The axiom that a disciple will be like his teacher is central to Jesus' educational model, and it undergirds the flow of thought in the pericope of Luke 6:39-49.

The one sentence mini-parable about a blind man leading a blind man is a veiled word a caution to the crowd gathered about Jesus. Those in the crowd should be careful whom they follow, lest they be led to destruction. Jesus then states the truth that a disciple will be like his teacher in 6:40, and bolsters this truth using metaphors and parables. Positioning himself against the hypocrites who are blind to their own sin (6:41-42), Jesus teaches that "each tree is known by its own fruit" (6:44), and then calls the crowd to put his words into practice (6:46-49). The one who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice is the wise man whose proverbial house is well built and resistant to storms, but the one who fails to do Jesus' words is the fool who eventually comes to ruin. The implication in Jesus' instruction is that he is not a blind rabbi who will lead people to fall into destruction, but is a rabbi whose teachings will make his disciples wise. The crowd must judge whom they will follow because a disciple *will be like* his teacher. Jesus does not segregate one's words from his way of life. Rather, teachers instruct through both actions and words, and disciples must carefully evaluate the fruit of a teacher's life when determining whom to follow.

Imitate Me

Like Jesus, Paul views his way of life as a pedagogical instrument. In his meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, as well as in numerous instances throughout his epistles, Paul references his conduct as a means to exhort believers to walk in obedience to Christ. Copan observes,

> In reading through the letters of the Apostle Paul, one is struck by his relatively frequent and bold appeal to examine his life and character, and to follow his ways. It seems that this was one of his key strategies for the development of the spiritual

maturity of members of the communities he founded.[16]

In his letters to the churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, Paul utilizes the verb *mimeomai* ("to imitate") and the noun *mimētēs* ("imitator") to invite believers to mimic his way of life. The repeated call to imitate his manner of life suggests that teaching by example was not a peripheral mode of instruction for Paul. Pastoral ministry, in Paul's view, required communicating truth by one's manner of life which supplemented and confirmed the verbal communication of the gospel.

To the Elders in Ephesus

Luke's record of Paul's final meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus in Acts 20:17-38 has been likened by several commentators to Samuel's farewell speech to Israel in 1 Samuel 12.[17] Like Samuel, Paul uses the known testimony of his way of life as the basis for a farewell speech that is "mainly hortatory, but also in some degree apologetic."[18] Paul invites the Ephesian elders to recall his pattern of life not only to refute whatever slander they may have heard against him, but also to imprint in their minds the marks of faithful shepherding in the church, as this is certain to be their last encounter with him.

The first recorded line of Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders is a summons to recall his way of life. "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia," Paul begins. In a speech where he will warn of wolves who will infiltrate the flock, Paul wants the Ephesian elders to recall—even scrutinize—his way of life as proof that he is a godly shepherd and not the wolf that some may be saying he is. Paul calls the elders to remember his three years of sincere ministry

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[15]Victor Copan, "Spiritual Formation and St. Paul as Spiritual Director: Determining the Primary Aims," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 144.

[17]See F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 418; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 629-32.

[18]Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, 413.

among them (20:31), appeals to the eyewitness knowledge of his way of life (20:34), and

reminds the elders that he has shown them how to work hard and give generously

(20:35). The foundation for Paul's speech was an appeal,

> to their memory, especially of four aspects of his ministry—his humility (meaning perhaps his humiliations), his tears, his testings on account of 'the machinations of the Jews' (19, NEB), and his faithful preaching-teaching ministry, in public and in private, in which he concentrated on the need for both Jews and Gentiles to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus.[19]

As Paul brings to memory his own pattern of ministry, he boldly exhorts the Ephesian

elders, "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" (20:28). Paul's declaration that (1) he is innocent of the blood of all men (20:26-

27), (2) his use of shepherding imagery (20:29-31), and (3) his emphasis on contentment

rather than greed (20:33-35) leave no doubt that he is using Ezekiel 33-34 as a rubric for

faithful ministry. In Ezekiel 33, the faithful watchman is the one who warns the people in

the city of danger, while the unfaithful watchman remains quiet in view of impending

peril thereby incurring bloodguilt. In Ezekiel 34, the selfish shepherds (kings and priests)

of Israel have fed themselves rather than the sheep, have eaten the fat portions, and

clothed themselves in the fine wool of the flock. These wicked pseudo-shepherds have

neglected the weak, ruled with force and harshness, and it is the LORD will who "rescue

[his] sheep from their mouths" (Ezk 34:10). The so-called shepherds have become the

predators of those under their care. As Paul brings to mind his way of life to the

Ephesian elders, he is proving that he has been a faithful shepherd, and also giving the

elders a template for their charge of pastoring the church in his absence. He has preached

Christ faithfully, tended to the needs of the church with tears, lived simply, given

generously, and suffered for the cause of Christ. Paul's exhortation to "pay careful

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[19]John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, BST (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1990), 325.

attention to yourselves and to the flock," then, is a call to imitate the pattern of pastoral ministry he displayed in the three years he lived in Ephesus.

To the Church in Philippi

Standing alone, Paul's words in Philippians 3:17 bristle modern ears with their apparent arrogance. He writes, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." It is one thing to teach by example, but it is quite another to so openly insist that others mimic one's actions. However, Paul's bold words are qualified by the preceding section in Philippians 3:12-13, where he admits that he "had not yet himself arrived"[20] and is pressing on toward the goal of maturity in Christ. The context of Philippians 3 also makes certain that Paul is renouncing any form of confidence in the flesh in which he could boast and is instead inviting the church to "share his own experience of man's need to rely with full confidence on the divine power graciously offered through his gospel."[21] Additionally, the Philippians were familiar with the first-century educational paradigm of discipleship and would not be surprised when their father in the faith—one with Apostolic authority— upheld his life as an example for imitation.[22] Further, Paul only holds his example up to the Philippians as secondary to the ultimate example of sacrificial love in Jesus Christ which is clearly portrayed in Philippians 2. All believers are called to have the mind of Christ (2:5),

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[20]James B. Polhill, *Paul & His Letters* (Nashville: B&H Publishers, 1999), 169.

[21]D. M. Stanley, "Imitation in Paul's Letters: Its Significance for His Relationship to Jesus and to His Own Christian Foundations," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. Francis Wright Beare, Peter Richardson, and John C. Hurd (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), 141.

[22]Reinhartz surveys Paul's use of the *mimeomai* word group and states that "there is general consensus that the exhortation [to imitate him] is Christologically based and bound up with Paul's apostleship." Adele Reinhartz, "On the Meaning of the Pauline Exhortation: '*mimētai mou ginesthe—* become imitators of me,'" *Studies in Religion* 16 (Fall 1987): 394. She also notes that "the specific content of Paul's calls to the imitation of himself reflect his assessment of the situation he is addressing" (402) in any given church.

> Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:6-8)

First and foremost, the Philippians should imitate the humble, sacrificial example of Christ. Paul's example of being "poured out as a drink offering" (2:17), suffering "the loss of all things" (3:8) and emptying himself is testimony to his own imitation of the life of Christ. The Philippian believers can understand and emulate the humility of Christ by recalling and imitating the ways of Paul.

Paul continues his exhortation to the Philippians to mimic his way of life in 4:9, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." Some of what the Philippians have learned from Paul has been through verbal instruction, but they have also learned through what they have seen. Hansen writes, "The verbs *learned and received* refer primarily to his teaching of the gospel, and the verbs *heard and seen* refer to the paradigmatic value of his life."[24] The emphasis throughout the Pauline Epistles is not merely that believers know facts about the person of Jesus, but that they "walk in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Phil 1:27). Paul's life, though imperfect, is a fitting example of one who walks in the steps of Christ. The Philippian believers, therefore, are urged to mimic him.

To the Church Thessalonica

As he did in the Philippian letter, Paul also refers to his way of life as an example for the church in both letters to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul affirms the church for imitating his joy through affliction, while in 2 Thessalonians he admonishes believers to imitate him by working hard to provide for their own needs.

First Thessalonians begins on a note of encouragement. The Thessalonian believers have imitated Paul's conduct, and as a result, they are an example of faith for

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[24]G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 300.

other churches. In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7, he writes,

> You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you
> became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much
> affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the
> believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The church's imitation of Paul's life is more fully defined in chapter two where Paul

recalls the believers' firsthand knowledge of his pattern of life. The Thessalonian

believers had seen Paul suffer (2:2), minister boldly (2:3), speak without flattery (2:5),

exercise gentleness (2:7), work diligently (2:9), live righteously (2:10), and exhort with

fatherly love (2:11). The language within 2:1-12 stresses the church's firsthand

knowledge of Paul's behavior as he uses the phrases: "for you yourselves know" (2:1),

"as you know" (2:2, 5), "you remember" (2:9), "you are witnesses" (2:10), and "for you

know" (2:11). Paul's testimony to his way of life in chapter two, then, provides the

content of the church's imitation mentioned in 1:5-7. They learned from Paul's way of

life, have imitated him, and now they are serving as an example for other believers in

Macedonia and Achaia.

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul again holds up his pattern of life for emulation, but

this time he does so in a manner of rebuking the freeloaders in the Thessalonian

community. After instructing the church to "keep away from any brother who is walking

in idleness" (2 Thess 3:6), Paul calls the church to imitate his work ethic. Again, he

appeals to firsthand knowledge that the Thessalonians had of his life:

> For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle
> when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but
> with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any
> of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an
> example to imitate. (2 Thess 3:7-9)

The reason Paul waives his right of compensation is different in Thessalonica than it is in

Corinth where he does the same. In Corinth, Paul does not take compensation "to show

that his preaching is a task entrusted to him (1 Cor 9:15-18); but in 2 Thessalonians, it is

to make himself into an example to be imitated by the congregation."[25] Had Paul not

given up his right to remuneration, his exhortation would have been hollow and easily

dismissed by the idle believers in Thessalonica. His way of life was a weighty pattern of

sacrificial labor and selfless love. As such, he was able to authoritatively exhort the idle

in Thessalonica to mimic his example.

To the Church in Corinth

Paul's didactic use of his way of life appears once again in 1 Corinthians.

After reminding the church of the close paternal relationship he shares with them, Paul

exhorts the Corinthians to mimic his example:

> For though you have countless guides (*paidagōgous*) in Christ, you do not have
> many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge
> you, then, be imitators of me. This is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and
> faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them
> everywhere in every church. (1 Cor 4:15-17)

A *paidagōgos*, or guardian, would supervise, discipline, and instruct a master's

child often through "shaming and admonishing,"[26] but Paul reminds the church that he is

not a mere guardian. Rather, he is their father in the faith—the one who brought them the

life-giving truth of the gospel. In contrast to a *paidagōgos*, Paul does not shame his

children in the faith, but instead holds up his way of life as a resource for instructing the

believers in the way they should live. As a child plays "copy-cat" to his father, the

church should copy Paul's lived-out faith. To this end, Timothy is dispatched to Corinth

in order to assist the believers in recalling Paul's way of life. Timothy will serve as

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[25]Maarten J. J. Menken, *2 Thessalonians*, NTR (New York: Routledge, 1994), 135.

[26]Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *First Corinthians*, AB, vol. 32 (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 221.
Fitzmeyer helpfully distinguishes the role of an ancient guardian from a modern pedagogue: "Paul uses
paidagōgos, from which English 'pedagogue' is derived, but which etymologically has a different meaning,
'child-leader.' In the ancient Greek-speaking world, it denoted a man, usually an elderly slave (*oiketēs*)
and often of foreign origin (or a prisoner of war), who had to take a boy to school and supervise his conduct
(seeing that he studied and did not play truant); he was not per se a teacher (*didaskolos*) but was one who
had authority and to whom respect was owed. He usually had a great deal to do with the character training
of those of whom he was in charge." Ibid.

Paul's "apostolic *parousia*,"[27] and "will remind the Corinthians not only by words, but will represent in his own personal conduct the ways he has learned from Paul."[28]

Paul's pattern of life is certainly a mode of instruction for the Corinthian church, but what exactly does his life teach? That is, if the Corinthian believers are to mimic Paul's ways, how are they to behave? Dustin Ellington argues that the Corinthians are to mimic the manner in which Paul laid down his rights in order to advance the gospel.[29] In 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1, Paul describes how he has given up his own rights and then concludes the pericope with the call to imitation in 11:1.[30] Ellington argues that it is Paul's statement in 9:23 ("I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings") which gives definition to the imperative "Be imitators" in 11:1. Specifically, Ellington zeroes in on the compound noun *sugkoinonos*, arguing that Paul's co-fellowship, or partnership with Christ in the gospel is shown in the way he sacrifices his rights in order that others might be saved. Christ himself set aside his rights to work for the salvation of man, and Paul is a *sugkoinonos,* a fellow partaker, in the blessings of the gospel as he likewise sets aside his rights in order that "by all means" (1 Cor 9:22) others might be saved. To imitate Paul, in Ellington's view, is to lay down one's rights so that through one's sacrifices others might be saved.

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[27]R. W. Funk, "The Apostolic *Parousia*: Form and Significance," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox,* ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 249.

[28]Boykin Sanders, "Imitating Paul: 1 Cor 4:16," *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 4 (October 1981): 363.

[29]Dustin Ellington, "Imitating Paul's Relationship to the Gospel: 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (March 2011): 304.

[30]Fee notes, "This final imperative has suffered from one of the more unfortunate chapter divisions in the NT. The language and argument are such that it seems clearly to conclude the parenesis of 10:23-33. It is not enough for Paul that he appeal to his own examples. They are to follow ("imitate") that example, in the same way that he has imitated Christ . . . The emphasis here is certainly on the example of Christ, which for Paul finds its primary focus in his sacrifice on the cross." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 490.

Unlike Ellington, Sanders sees Paul's "communal concern as the central criterion for his conduct."[31] The primary way in which the community was to mimic Paul's way of life was to lay down their rights to preserve unity with their brothers (i.e., fellow believers). "The imitation of Paul's 'ways,'" according to Sanders, "should bring the Corinthians to an appropriate understanding of the message of the cross and its implications for their life as a community." While Ellington emphasizes sacrificial living for those outside the faith, Sanders emphasizes cross-bearing for the edification of those within the community of believers.

Both Ellington and Sanders make helpful contributions in defining what it means to imitate Paul's way of life, yet each are too narrow in their definition. First Corinthians, like much of the Pauline corpus, contains instructions for how believers are to preserve unity within the church as well as instructions about how to advance the gospel to those who do not believe. To emphasize Paul's evangelistic ambition to the exclusion of his ecclesiological concern, or vice-versa, is to fail to see that church unity and evangelism are two sides of the same coin. The unity of the local church is not merely for the enjoyment of believers, but serves the missional purpose of making the church a city on a hill, beaming light into the world.

The common ground between the views of Ellington and Sanders, namely, that Paul adopts a sacrificial lifestyle for the good of others (for unity in the church and for sharing the gospel with unbelievers), is the best way to define his command to mimic his example. It is the pericope of 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5 which brings the most definition to Paul's way of life and his command to imitate him as he imitates Christ in 11:1. In 1:23 Paul states, "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" and in 2:2, he reiterates, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The juxtaposition of the Christ—the anticipated king of glory—

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[31]Sanders, "Imitating Paul," 362-63.

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impaled on a cross was indeed a *skandalon* (1:23) to Jews and stupidity to Greeks. Fee

notes that the context of 1 Corinthians 11:1 "is the tribulation list of vv. 11-13, in which

Paul describes his own life and ministry in terms consonant with the gospel of a crucified

Messiah."[32] Plummer also sees the scorn of the cross as the interpretive key for the

imitation texts in 1 Corinthians. He writes,

> In contrast to the Corinthians, the apostles are threatened, viewed as fools, mocked
> as weak, persecuted, and even considered "the rubbish of the world" (4:8-13). It is
> this correct embodiment of Christian leadership and existence, as typified in the
> apostles' acceptance of worldly disapproval and suffering, that Paul hopes his
> converts will imitate. Humility and the way of the cross are diametrically opposed
> to the triumphalism of the Corinthians. Paul thus aptly terms his "gospel lifestyle"
> as his "ways in Christ Jesus" since the Lord who suffered and died on behalf of
> humanity is in some sense pictured in them. (1 Cor 1:23-24; 2:2)[33]

The Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and it is this Christ, the Christ who wears

thorns and carries a cross, whom Paul imitates. Because his life of suffering and cross-

bearing is undeniable, Paul can legitimately write to the Corinthian church saying, "I die

every day" (1 Cor 15:31). Therefore, to imitate Paul as he imitates Christ, is to willingly

lay down one's rights, just as the Savior laid down his, in order to cultivate unity in the

church and to advance the gospel in order that many might be saved.

Paul's farewell speech in Acts 20 along with his epistolary exhortations to

remember and imitate his way of life, make clear that teaching is not limited to verbal

communication. Paul's *life* taught. His actions were held up as a template for the flock.

His joy in suffering, courage in proclamation, gentleness, labor, and generosity were

God-intended means of instruction to the church and the world of the transformative truth

of the gospel.

Yet, it would be premature to conclude that simply because Paul taught the

church with his way of life, that the life of a local church elder must also be worthy of

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[32]Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 203.

[33]Robert L. Plummer, *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 84-85.

imitation. Such a conclusion would be a fallacious *non sequitur*, because Paul was not an elder in a local church, but an Apostle with a unique role and function in the history of the church. Further, the Bible contains no expressly stated commands requiring elders to be able to say, like Paul, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Paul's didactic use of his way of life does not prove that a qualified elder's life must be worthy of imitation. However, teaching through the example of one's life (along with verbal instruction of sound doctrine) is the philosophy of pastoral ministry that Paul transfers to Timothy, Titus, and the elders in the Pastoral Epistles.

Faithful Men Who Can Teach Others

Though written specifically to Timothy and Titus, the Pastoral Epistles showcase Paul's philosophy of pastoral ministry for all overseers in the church. The Pastoral Epistles reveal that a pastor must commit himself to verbally communicating the "knowledge of the truth"[34] and nonverbally instructing others in obedience to Christ through his way of life. The pastoral model which includes instruction by example is seen in no less than three ways in Paul's letters to Timothy and Tius; (1) the overall emphasis on godly conduct in the Pastoral Epistles, (2) Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus to be examples for the church, and (3) the responsibility given to Timothy and Titus to entrust leadership in the church to faithful men.

The Pastoral Epistles make clear that the truth of Christ is a lived-out truth. The concept of orthopraxy as the fruit of orthodoxy is seen immediately in Paul's opening line to Titus: "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness . . ." The objective body of truth about Jesus Christ, which has been passed from Paul to Timothy, Titus, and the churches, is a truth which facilitates godliness. Any who

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[34]1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25, 3:7; Titus 1:1.

dichotomize behavior from belief are not of the truth. Paul's words in Titus 1:1 are

"virtually equivalent to a formula, *fides et mores*, used by Augustine and other patristic

authors to describe the totality of the Christian life—correct belief accompanied by

appropriate behavior."[35]

The union of sound doctrine to godly living echoes throughout the letter to

Titus, perhaps most of all in Titus 2:11-14:

> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Mounce rightly states that "these verses provide a firm theological foundation for right

practice,"[36] showing the truth that believers are ransomed *from* lawlessness *for* good

works. Salvation is not limited to a future event, but is a present reality which is

evidenced in the lives of believers who walk in freedom from bondage to sin with the

power to live self-controlled, godly lives.

In the Pastoral Epistles, "godliness," from the *euseb* word group, "is a

dominant feature of the theological-ethical portrait of authentic Christianity."[37]

Godliness, or piety, was a "highly prized Hellenistic cardinal virtue," but Paul's

subversive thesis is that the prized virtue of godliness is "truly attainable only in

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[35]Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 304. Additionally, Collins renders the second *kat* in the same manner as the first instance of *kata* in the verse: "Paul, God's slave and apostle of Jesus Christ for the sake of the faith of God's chosen ones, the full knowledge of truth that is for the sake of godliness . . ." This translation may capture the intended meaning more clearly by conveying the causal effect of sound doctrine to godly living. Ibid., 301.

[36]William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 420.

[37]Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 174. Other uses of the *euseb* word group are found in 1 Tim 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 5:4; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim 3:5, 12; Titus 1:1; 2:12.

Christ."[38] Believers who live godly lives are a testimony to the surrounding culture of the veracity of Christian doctrine, but if their lives do not evidence godliness, the truth they profess is tarnished.

The purpose statement of 1 Timothy further shows how godly conduct serves to authenticate true doctrine. Paul explains, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Tim 3:14-15). The behavior of the church matters because conduct confirms or falsifies truth claims to the watching world. For this reason, all believers are to be zealous for good works, and specific instructions are given in the Pastoral Epistles for women to adorn themselves with good works, which is "proper for those who profess godliness" (1 Tim 2:10), for bondservants to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:10), and for the wealthy to be "rich in good works" (1 Tim 6:18). The Pastoral Epistles are clear: godly living serves to authenticate the truth of Christ.

The leaders in the churches must not only evidence godliness as a testimony to those outside the church, but also to serve as an instructive example for those within the Body of Christ. Paul coaches both Titus and Timothy to give careful attention to the example they set for the flock. In Titus 2, after addressing the behavior of older men, older women, younger women, and younger men, Paul exhorts Titus, "Show yourself in all respects to be a model (*tupos*) of good works." Unlike his opponents in Crete, who are "unfit for any good work" (Titus 1:16), Titus is to "be a mold into which others can

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[38]Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 174.

be impressed and therefore bear a likeness to him."[39] Similarly, Paul instructs young

Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example

(*tupos*) in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). Timothy's youth

would serve to discredit his authority, but his example of godly behavior could give him

the credibility he needed to lead the flock in Ephesus. Only a few verses later Timothy is

cautioned, "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so

doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." Again, the behavior of the teacher

is yoked with the message of the teacher. Just as Timothy learned from Paul's teaching

and his conduct (2 Tim 3:10), so too the church in Ephesus will be instructed by the

example of Timothy as will the church in Crete learn from the model of Titus's life.

Paul gives many instructions to Timothy and Titus in his letters, but one that

both pastors receive from their father in the faith is the duty of identifying, training, and

entrusting other men with pastoral oversight in the church. In the first sentence of the

body of the letter to Titus, Paul writes, "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you may

put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you . . ."

Titus' primary tasks were to clean up whatever theological or ecclesiological messes he

inherited and to prepare the churches on the island of Crete for future success by

appointing elders who would oversee and pastor the flock of God. Timothy was also

given the charge of multiplying pastoral leadership in Ephesus. Paul instructs, "You

then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have

heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able

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[39]Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 413.

to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:1-2). Timothy had received the truth of Christ from Paul and now it was of prime importance for him to seek other faithful men (*pistois anthrōpois*), who could serve together in teaching the church. But who are these "faithful men" who will be able to teach others?

Paul's pastoral philosophy of teaching by example is woven into the definition of "faithful men" who are able to teach others. Luke Timothy Johnson translates "able to teach others" (*hoitines hikanoi esontai*) as "competent enough to teach others" in order to retain the adjectival sense of *hikanos* which means "qualified."[40] Johnson continues his exegesis contending,

> The use of the future *esontai* makes clear that the personal character of being faithful is not the same as the skill to teach others; for that task, these people need to become *hikanos* (competent). The phrasing neatly combines the classic Hellenistic convictions concerning the teacher: the truth is witnessed to both through deeds and in words. [41]

Johnson's analysis suggests that "faithful men" are not those who simply teach true facts, but those who have a testimony of godly living. In fact, Johnson argues that the imperative in 2:2 is part of a larger pericope in which Paul mentions a faithful man by name. In 1:15-18, Paul contrasts the loyal behavior of Onesiphorus to the faithless behavior of Phygelus and Hermongenes, when he writes,

> You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Twice, Paul states that Timothy already knows the behavior of Onesiphorus ("you are

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[40]Johnson cites 1 Cor 15:9; 2 Cor 2:16; 3:5-6; Col 1:12 and Rom 15:23 as evidence for this usage. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 35A (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 365.

[41]Ibid.

aware" in 1:15 and "you well know" in 1:18). "Why, then, does Paul tell him what he already knows? As a reminder and as an example that he should imitate."[42] Onesiphorus was a faithful man—one worthy of Timothy's imitation—because he rendered service to Paul and was unashamed of the testimony of the gospel. Timothy was charged to likewise be faithful in his conduct, and to find other men who lived godly lives to assist him in leading the church by example.

Paul sketches out a list of qualifications in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 to ensure that Titus and Timothy know what they should be looking for when identifying and establishing faithful men to teach others. The virtue lists in the Pastoral Epistles share commonality with other Greco-Roman virtues[43] and as a result some have concluded that the lists share a preformed source.[44] While Paul may have relied on a preformed source, his purpose in doing so is not solely that the church elders fit into the ethical norms of the culture and avoid bringing reproach upon the church. No doubt, avoiding reproach is part of the reason elders should be godly. However, there is another reason as to why elders must evidence godly character. Paul's philosophy of pastoral ministry, derived from the Good Shepherd himself, is one in which the pastor's way of life is a primary means of instruction for the flock. The congregations who learn under godly elders will learn more than information expressed in words. They will learn from the *tupos* of the elder's life. They will be like their teachers. The elders appointed by

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[42]Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 360.

[43]In his first-century work, *Strategikos* ("The General"), Onasander specifies the traits of an ideal military general: "I believe, then, that we must choose a general, not because of noble birth as priests are chosen, nor because of wealth as the superintendents of the gymnasia, but because he is temperate, self-restrained, vigilant, frugal, hardened to labour, alert, free from avarice, neither too young nor too old, indeed a father of children if possible, a ready speaker, and a man with a good reputation." Onasander, *Strategikos*, ed. and trans. Illinois Greek Club, Loeb Classical Library 156, 374-75, accessed December, 7, 2016, https://www.loebclassics.com/view /onasander-general/1928/pb_LCL156.375.xml? rskey=onH5K a&result=1&mainRsKey=z2ukPr.

[44]See Merkle's treatment of the arguments for the virtue lists coming from preformed tradition in Benjamin L. Merkle, "Are the Qualifications for Elders or Overseers Negotiable?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (April-June 2014): 173-76.

Titus and Timothy must evidence godly character precisely because their character is one of the God-intended means of instructing the flock in the saving doctrine of Jesus Christ. To be saved by Christ is to be saved *from* sin, *for* good works, and the elders in a local church must live lives which testify to the reality of new birth by faith in Jesus Christ. Simply put, local church elders are only qualified to teach if their lives are worthy of imitation.

Implications

The conclusion that elders must exhibit a way of life that is worthy of imitation in order to be qualified to teach in the church has several practical implications. First, congregations must reject false qualifications for pastoral leadership. Often, one's charisma in public speaking, expertise in a field (music, administration, finance), or his academic credentials are deemed sufficient for official church leadership positions (the NT office of elder). While such competencies are indeed God's gifts to the local church, they are not sufficient qualifications for the entrustment of the office of elder. Sooner or later, the brilliant light of one's skills will wane, and the example of his life will shine brightly—for better or worse—to the congregation. The contemporary church is susceptible to a myopic lust of giftedness because of today's entertainment-oriented culture, wherein "church" is often defined as a Sunday event. As a result, extra vigilance is needed in identifying qualified elders so as not to be blinded by one's giftedness. Churches who entrust pastoral leadership to gifted individuals without examining their way of life do so to their own peril.

Second, if elders are established based more on giftedness than integrity, the church will be deprived of one of the Lord's gifts to his people—real-life examples of godliness. If pastors are given leadership offices simply because they are gifted in preaching or leading music, the church will likely think that ministry is for "professionals" and that they are only "regular Christians," thus exempt from the rigorous

demands of discipleship. Or, if elders are established based on their knowledge of the Bible alone, the flock will likely define spiritual maturity narrowly in terms of knowledge rather than in terms of Christ-likeness. Elders whose lives are worthy of imitation and who live among the flock give the church the gift of a hopeful vision of spiritual maturity that is attainable through long-haul obedience.

Third, the conclusion that elders instruct the flock through their way of life will assist churches when identifying elder candidates. Often, quiet men who lack public speaking eloquence or interpersonal woo, begin at the back of the line for church leadership. Meanwhile extroverted, confident, life-of-the-party-types ride the fast track to church leadership. But the one who cannot speak well from a microphone may be a faithful teacher of the Word at the dinner table and may possess great authority in the church through the testimony of his life of obedient faith. Likewise, one who has no college degree may lack precision on technical theological terms, but evidence daily contrition of sin, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and reborn affections. In general, the search for elders ought to begin with the measure of a man's life and progress to his ability to verbally teach competently, not vice-versa.

Fourth, if elders must be qualified to teach nonverbally as well as verbally, there are two non-negotiable elements which prove a man's readiness for the office: time and community. The path to eldership has no shortcuts. A man must evidence the fruit of godly character over time in the presence of other believers who can confirm his way of life as one worthy of imitation. Though some pastors will be hired to the office of elder without evidencing a godly way of life to a particular local church, churches who hire pastors from outside the membership must proceed cautiously with diligence to verify the new hire's example of life. A pastor cannot establish his qualification for office apart from spending time in community. It is to these two non-negotiable elements of elder assessment—time and community—that the discussion now turns.

CHAPTER 3

THE PRACTICAL PURSUIT OF QUALIFIED ELDERS

"They say it was just physical abuse," laments *Boston Globe* metro editor Peter Canellos in the 2015 Academy Award winning film *Spotlight*, "but it's more than that. This was spiritual abuse. You know why I went along with everything? Because priests are supposed to be the good guys."[1] Once upon a time, it was culturally assumed that church leaders—whether Catholic or Protestant—were indeed the good guys, the last to be suspected of impropriety. However, the spotlight of truth in the age of mass communications, investigative journalism, and up-to-the-minute breaking news, has revealed the sad reality that many church leaders are not only unfit for office, but downright criminal. The Catholic sexual abuse scandals unveiled at the turn of the millennium, the financial improprieties of numerous television preachers, and the frequent marital infidelity of celebrated evangelical pastors provide ample reason for a watching world to be skeptical that church authorities are the good guys they are supposed to be.

The wreckage of these church leadership failures, along with thousands of less publicized, yet equally tragic transgressions by pastors, only accentuates the need to uphold biblical qualifications for elders in the local church. When biblical qualifications for elders are ignored, unknown, or blatantly defied, the flock suffers. The qualifications for elders in the local church are given in Scripture in order to facilitate spiritual vitality in the people of God and to serve as a safeguard against the pain, shame, and destruction caused by character deficiency in the pastorate. What, then, can churches do to ensure

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[1]*Spotlight*, directed by Tom McCarthy (Participant Media, 2015), DVD (Universal, 2016).

that those who serve as elders (or, in official church leadership positions regardless of the title), meet biblical qualifications for the office and manifest a way of life that instructs others in godliness?

While recognizing that no human being is flawless and that no fail-proof formulas exist to protect the church from pastoral sin with perfect certainty; churches can take steps to develop elders who exhibit a godly manner of life and can also incorporate habits into the work of ministry which assist elders in remaining above reproach. The two non-negotiable principles that churches must weave into elder identification, training, and service are to evaluate elders over time and to maintain relational proximity between elders and the church community. That is, aspiring elders must evidence godliness over time within the community of the local church.

Godliness over Time within Community

Scripture explicitly and implicitly reveals that elders must evidence qualifications for the office over time within the community of the local church. In 1 Timothy 5:22-25, Paul cautions Timothy against appointing elders prematurely. He writes,

> Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments). The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

Laying hands on an individual was a common way of conferring authority and validating a commission in both the Old and New Testament times and Paul references Timothy's commission into ministry through the laying on of hands three times in the Pastoral Epistles.[2] In the pericope of 5:17-25, Paul is addressing the remuneration of elders, the discipline and restoration of elders, and the selection of elders, which makes it most

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[2] 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6.

likely that when he says "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" he is specifically referring to the commissioning of elders. Additionally, Mappes skillfully refutes the notion that 1 Timothy 5:22 only refers to restoring repentant elders, and concludes, "The laying on of hands in verse 22 is best understood as referring to identifying elders publicly."[3] He adds, "many commentators . . . agree that the rite of laying on of hands in 1 Timothy 5:22 refers to ordination"[4] and proceeds to cite twenty-six commentators of repute who share his view. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul's instruction to Timothy is that he should exercise patience and caution when identifying and commissioning elders.

First Timothy 5:22-25 contains three reasons as to why Timothy ought not be hasty in commissioning elders. First, if Timothy appoints unqualified men, he will in some manner share responsibility for their sins. The ambiguous phrase, "take part in the sins of others" may refer to the qualification in 1 Timothy 3:6 that elders not be recent converts lest they become conceited with their quick rise to authority in the church. If Timothy lays hands on a new believer too hastily, he bears some degree of responsibility for setting up a young believer to fail. Another plausible interpretation of "taking part in the sins of others" is that by hasty appointment of an unqualified elder, Timothy may bear responsibility for the church's sin when the flock mimics the conduct of the unqualified elder. Those who lay hands upon a man to commission him as an elder are called to sense the grave reality that they may actually be sinning against God and man by hasty appointment of an unqualified elder.

A second reason Timothy should be slow to commission elders is that human beings are skilled at hiding sin. In 5:24, Paul notes that though some sins are well known

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[3]D. A. Mappes, "The 'Laying on of Hands' of Elders," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (October-December 1997): 476.

[4]Ibid., 475-76.

and broadly judged within a community, other sins appear later. One wonders if Paul writes this with names in mind from his experience at various churches throughout the Mediterranean world. Demas, for example, was at one time a co-laborer in ministry with Paul, but loved the things of the world and abandoned the faith (Phlm 1:24, 2 Tim 4:10). Paul had witnessed the reality of hidden sins being brought to light in his ministry and the heartbreak of once apparent brothers who shipwrecked their faith (1 Tim 1:19). Timothy, on the other hand, is new to the pastorate, and possibly naïve to the hypocrisy he will encounter. Timothy must not be easily awed by initial appearances, but should exercise patience so that he can see the fruit of faith over time in a variety of circumstances in the life of aspiring elders.

The third reason Timothy should be slow to appoint elders counterbalances the second reason. Just as some sins appear later in life, so too do some good works remain hidden and only appear over time. Hasty appointment of elders may cause Timothy to overlook God's gracious gift of qualified men who would only be known as such over the course of time. Jesus taught his disciples to avoid doing works of righteousness in the sight of others (Matt 6:1-18) and in some cases, the hidden, righteous conduct of qualified elders may surface only over time. In view of 1 Timothy 5:22-25, Strauch wisely concludes that "because of the crying need for church leaders, there is always pressure to make hasty appointments, but such appointments create more serious, long-lasting problems."[6] Timothy will be wise to exercise patience as he seeks to entrust faithful men with oversight in the household of God.

In addition to 1 Timothy 5:22-25, the way in which the church in Acts commissions leaders also reveals the necessity of evidencing godly conduct over time within community when appointing individuals to formal service in the church. The

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[6]Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 220.

book of Acts says little about the process of appointing elders, but the appointment of deacons in Acts 6 and the commissioning of missionaries in Acts 13 by the church in Antioch are paradigmatic for how the early church identified and commissioned workers in ministry. In Acts 6, when the need for deacons arose to administrate the daily food distribution, the Apostles "summoned the full number of the disciples" (6:2) and instructed the group to "pick out from among [them] seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom" (6:3). The congregation then nominated seven men for the task and the Apostles "prayed and laid their hands on them" (6:6), commissioning them with authority to lead in the ministry of the church. Because there had been strife resulting from alleged partiality in the distribution of food, the newly appointed deacons needed a reputation that would "command complete confidence"[7] arising from their known testimony of honesty, wisdom, and love among the congregation. In order to settle the dispute between the Greek and Hebrew widows, the Apostles were not merely looking for managerial competence. Rather, they sought to appoint individuals whose character was known and trusted within the church so that both sides in the dispute could have confidence in those exercising authority over them. The seven candidates for the commission were nominated by the church community to the Apostles for appointment, showing that they were in some measure vetted by the eyes of those who had observed their conduct. These seven leaders were commissioned based on the godly character they had displayed in hundreds of little ways over time throughout the communal life of the church.

The commissioning of missionaries in Acts 13 also shows the integral role of the community of faith in attesting to the call of God upon those commissioned into official ministry roles. Luke records,

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon

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[7]F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 128.

who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. (Acts 13:1-4)

The text is not explicit in the role of the community in commissioning Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for missionary service, but Bock notes that Acts 13:1-3 is "in the context of what is likely congregational worship," adding that, "God calls those among the most gifted out from the larger community."[8] Stott also sees implications of a corporate worship gathering in Acts 13:1-3. He questions who "they" includes in 13:2 and concludes that it is "probable that the church members as a whole are in mind"[9] based on the church being mentioned in 13:1, the similarity of Acts 13 with the Acts 6 occasion of laying hands upon the seven, and also that Paul and Barnabas "gathered the church together" (Acts 14:27) upon their return to Antioch to report about that for which they had been commissioned. Additionally, Acts 14:4 states that Paul and Barnabas were "sent out by the Holy Spirit," but the Spirit's commissioning is not independent of the agency of the local church. Stott contends, "We should not depict the church's role as having been entirely passive. Would it not be true to say both that the Spirit sent them out, by instructing the church to do so, and that the church sent them out, having been directed by the Spirit to do so?"[10] Paul and Barnabas had ministered in Antioch among the people of God for at least one year (Acts 11:26), which is ample time for the believers at Antioch to ascertain their character and competency in ministry. Croft explains,

> The church and its leaders had certainty of God's call because they had already witnessed the fruitfulness of these men's past labor among them. They were able to affirm them, not only by God's guidance through his Spirit, but by their own

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[8]Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2007), 439.

[9]John Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church, and the World*, BST (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1990), 216.

[10]Ibid., 217-18.

experience in serving and ministering alongside Saul and Barnabas.[11]
Both Acts 6 and Acts 13 show that communal verification of one's qualification for ministry was normative in the practice of the early church. It is difficult to see how either the seven men of Acts 6 or Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13 could have been commissioned in good faith by the church body unless they had spent significant time among those who appointed them for the task. The normal means of commissioning individuals into ministry is through the attestation of the local church to the competency and character of those commissioned.

The qualification lists for elders (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9) offer one more implicit argument that an elder candidate evidence godly character over time within relational proximity to the local church. Both qualification lists begin with the overarching standard that an elder must be "above reproach" (1 Tim 3:2, Titus 1:6, 7), which means that the elder is to be blameless, "the kind of man whom no one suspects of wrongdoing and immorality."[12] To Timothy, Paul clarifies that one must not only have a godly reputation within the church, but that an elder must also "be well thought of by outsiders" (1 Tim 3:7) so as not to bring disgrace upon the name of Christ. Certainly, some outside the faith will not agree with an elder's beliefs even to the point of vitriol. Nevertheless, the elder's life should be such that even when his message of the cross of Christ is despised, his life cannot be legitimately condemned.

How does the church verify that a man is above reproach? Only over time within relational proximity to others. The only way an elder can lay claim to being above reproach is if he is known by others with whom he interacts. Indeed, being unknown— secretive, detached, or closed-off—would be reason enough for most in a given

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[11]Brian Croft, *Prepare Them to Shepherd: Test, Train, Affirm, and Send the Next Generation of Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 36.

[12]Thabiti Anyawible, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 57.

community to distrust a man even if his character was blameless in actuality. The burden of proof for being above reproach is not merely that a man is not known for unrighteous deeds; rather, the qualification lists present a positive standard to which the man must attain. In regard to the qualification list of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Mounce writes that "the emphasis here is on the type of external personal reputation that would be *a credit to the church*."[13] Being above reproach is not merely avoiding infamy, rather it is when one's life serves to credential the veracity of the gospel. A man is not deemed above reproach if the best others can say of him is that they are unsure how he would behave in a high-pressure situation, or they simply do not know whether or not he is given to drinking too much. Instead, the qualified elder's godly character must be known in order to be truly above reproach.

Moreover, many—if not all—of the listed qualifications for elders can only be ascertained over time. For instance, it is required that an elder is not quarrelsome, but most Sunday morning worship gatherings present no likely context for quarreling. It is during intense meetings, over dinner conversation, and in gray-area doctrinal debates that the fleshly fruit of quarreling arises. Likewise, competent, godly management of one's household cannot be proven or falsified hastily. One man's family may look pristine on the surface when in actuality the culture of his home glories in worldly success and facilitating works-based righteousness. Conversely, another man may be shepherding his wayward child with profound wisdom and patience, even while it may appear on the surface that he has mismanaged his home.[14]

The implicit reality in the qualification lists for elders that godly character is

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[13]William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 170. Emphasis mine.

[14]For an excellent exegetical treatment of the qualification in Titus 1:6 that an elder's "children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination," see Thomas R. Schreiner, "Overseeing and Serving the Church in the Pastoral and General Epistles," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 107-9.

borne out over time is stated more directly in 1 Timothy 3:10 in the qualification lists for deacons. Paul instructs, "And let [deacons] also be tested first, then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless." The word rendered "tested" in the ESV, *dokimaxésthōsan*, is from the same root that Paul uses elsewhere to describe the testing of one's works as a fire tests precious metal (1 Cor 3:13) as well as the seriousness with which one must examine oneself prior to participating in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:28). Further, the passage of time in the process of testing deacons is implied by the temporal adverb "then" (*eita*), which connects the testing of a potential deacon to the official service of the deacon in 1 Timothy 3:10. If deacons, who are entrusted with less authority in the church than elders, are to be tested over time to verify their qualification for office, how much more should the elders, who hold greater responsibility in the church, also be tested? It is only when a man lives in obedience to Christ in ongoing repentance and faith, that a local community can esteem him as being above reproach and thus qualified (in part) for the office of elder.

Though a biblical case has been made for the necessity of elders evidencing their qualification for office over time within the community of believers, a reasonable objection may be raised at this point. Many churches hire pastors from outside of the church who are largely unknown to the church family they have been hired to shepherd. It is not uncommon for congregations to know little about their newly hired pastor other than a few résumé facts and their own impressions from a single sermon preached in the interview process. Yet, many of these pastoral hires—despite the fact that they have not proven their qualification for office over time within the church community—turn out to be faithful elders. What, then, should be made of this common practice of calling a pastor from outside of a local church to fulfill the office of elder?

Hiring a pastor from outside of a given local church does not negate the necessity of time and community to verify his fitness for office; rather, this common practice only serves to prove the thesis. First of all, a man's qualification to be hired as a

pastor is most often predicated on his ministry within another community of believers over time. Just because one local church has not witnessed a man's character over time, does not mean that no one in the broader church can attest to his qualification. Wise churches will evaluate far more than a man's theological knowledge in the hiring process, and will spend ample time diligently researching the testimony of other believers who have observed the way of life of a potential hire.

Second, "hiring from within," is almost universally preferred in both the business world and the church for the very reason that even thorough hiring processes are very limited. When an outside candidate is hired and appointed to the office of elder, there is unavoidable risk of what has not yet been known and proven over time in the life of the local church community. Some outside hires may prove to be who they and their references said they were in the interview process, but sadly, it is not difficult to find a church who has been too hasty in the laying on of hands and has experienced the pain of pastoral buyer's remorse. Résumés and references are helpful in vetting qualified pastors, but they are no replacement for firsthand observations of a man's manner of life over time within a local church.

Third, even pastors who are qualified for the office of elder, but hired from outside of a congregation, are most often required to earn the trust of the flock over time within the new church where they serve. Getting a nameplate with "Senior Pastor" tacked outside a church office door does not mean that anyone within the church actually trusts or follows the newly hired pastor, no matter how fit he may be for office. It is over time, in relational proximity as he shepherds the flock of God that is among him with eagerness (1 Pet 5:1-3) that his leadership is effective.

Fourth, while hiring pastors from outside of a local church is most certainly one of God's means of providing faithful elders for his churches, it is nevertheless likely that such a model of finding church leadership is *at least sometimes* a pragmatic, even faithless, maneuver heavily influenced by contemporary business theory. When there is

pastoral failure, a lack of love between the flock and the shepherd, or strife on an elder board, it may be the very system of pragmatic external hiring which set the pastor and church up to fail in the first place. Not all external hiring should be condemned, but hiring qualified, "faithful men who can teach others" (2 Tim 2:2) from within the church family is preferable because it allows the church greater ability to assess a man's fitness for pastoring. When hiring from within is not an option, churches should do all that is possible to verify a man's qualification for eldership by examining his testimony of character over time from the community among whom he has previously lived and served.

Practical Steps

In view of the peril of appointing unqualified elders in haste, as well as the blessing that godly elders are to the vitality of the church family, churches must take practical steps to prioritize the development and maintenance of qualified elders. To be certain, elders—like every other part of the body of Christ—are gifts of God given to his church, and as such cannot be fabricated by the power of man. Even so, as God's normal means of giving sustenance to his people is not through miraculous provision of manna, but through regular cultivation of crops, so too the normal means of receiving God's gift of elders within a church is to cultivate an environment in the church in which elders grow and thrive.

Churches must take six steps to facilitate a culture in which qualified elders are identified, trained, and maintained. Though these steps may be combined into a more compact list or expanded into a more detailed prescription for elder development, some echo of each of the following six steps will almost certainly exist in a church where qualified elders are serving from generation to generation. Qualified men have and will continue to serve as elders in churches who do not emphasize elder development, but it is unlikely that a church will have a queue of qualified men to serve from one generation to

the next without (1) teaching the church about elders, (2) identifying elder candidates, (3) training men for eldership, (4) publically commissioning elders, (5) maintaining watchfulness of personal character by the elders, and (6) maintaining functional plurality among the elders.

Some of the aforementioned steps necessarily must follow each other (i.e. identifying a candidate logically precedes publically commissioning him to office), but these six steps need not be taken sequentially. Rather, it is best to view these steps as ongoing, cotemporaneous actions that form a church culture in which God's gift of church shepherds are developed and maintained to lead the church.

Teach the Church about Elders

The first practical step that can be taken to facilitate godly eldership is to regularly teach the church about the role, qualification, and necessity of elders. It cannot be assumed that church members have a biblical paradigm of godly leadership which guides their nomination of elder candidates, their personal aspiration to the office, and/or their evaluation of those who lead. Some may view pastoral leadership in one-dimensional terms thinking that a qualified elder is one who is an eloquent teacher, well-read, or successful in business, rather than the multifaceted qualifications necessary for the office. Others may have expectations for elders that are overly stringent on some qualifications, but lax in others. Moreover, some church cultures have a strong clergy-laity distinction, which will affect true plurality among the elders, others have consumeristic tendencies where the church members view staff pastors as employees of the lay elders, and still others have adopted a secular vision of leadership wherein the head pastor functions as an autocratic executive and the input of the elders matters very little. For these reasons, and many more, regular biblical teaching on eldership is imperative for cultivating healthy elders. The biblical emphases of servant-leadership, character, plurality, and sacrifice will, in time, form a collective expectation for righteous

leadership in the church.

Though written to Timothy and Titus, the PE were also meant to be received by the broader church body.[15] Therefore, "When Paul made the [qualification list for elders] public, he let the whole church hold elders accountable to meet God's standards."[16] Because the entire church has a vested interest in the integrity and competency of the elders, the whole church is enlisted in the process of identifying, evaluating, and maintaining competent, qualified elders. Church members must be taught that they bear partial responsibility for the ongoing health of the leadership of the church. Unlike fair-weather fans who celebrate a team's successes and are critical or uninterested when the going gets tough, church members—united in covenantal relationship to the Body of Christ—are called to sacrificial responsibility for the church especially when difficulties arise. Rather than jump ship, believers must humbly approach incompetent or unqualified elders and speak the truth in love. Rather than complain about decisions, believers ought to prayerfully discern how to practice godly submission. Rather than acquiesce to heterodoxy, believers must engage wayward leaders with the truth in order that the pure light of the gospel will shine through the ministry of the church. As biblical teaching on eldership prevails in a church, church polity can move from an irrelevant topic codified in obscure bylaws, to a practical privilege of the whole membership for taking responsibility of the leadership and long-term health of the church.

Identify Candidates

Robust biblical teaching on eldership will greatly assist in the process of identifying qualified elder candidates. Without a biblical lens, external appearances,

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[15]In regard to 1 Timothy, Mounce states, "The letter is private in that it written to Timothy, but public in that Paul is writing through Timothy to the church. The epistle's conclusion (6:21) makes this dual nature obvious when it says, 'Grace be with you [plural].'" Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 4.

[16]Dan Doriani, "The Profile of a Pastor: A Sermon Based on 1 Timothy 3:1-7," *Presbyterion* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 71.

superficial skills, and friendship alliances may influence leader selection in the church. Even Samuel was not immune from the woo of appearances when he sought to appoint Saul's successor. When the biblical qualifications for elders begin to take root in the hearts of the congregation, however, the elders can begin identifying future elder candidates by incorporating the community of believers and the test of time into the identification process.

First, elders must make the task of identifying future elder candidates a priority of their work. In his book *Tyranny of the Urgent*, Charles Hummel writes, "We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that many important tasks need not be done today, or even this week."[17] The development of future elders is important, but because it is not urgent compared to other needs and concerns at a church, few churches ever get around to forming a strategy for future elder development. As a result, many churches find themselves pressured to fill vacant seats in leadership offices and disregard the time necessary to verify that one is truly qualified for the office. Covey writes, "Many important activities become urgent through procrastination, or because we don't do enough prevention or planning."[18] Elder councils will serve their churches well by prioritizing the important task of elder development, so as not to put the future church under the precarious pressure to hastily appoint church leaders.[19] Wise churches will resist the urge to fill vacant leadership offices quickly believing that vacancy in church leadership is far better than having offices filled by unqualified leaders.

Second, future elder candidates can be identified by observing those in the

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[17]Charles E. Hummel, *Tyranny of the Urgent* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 6.

[18]Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: To Live, To Love, To Learn, to Leave a Legacy* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 37.

[19]The Time-Management Matrix in *First Things First* may assist elder teams in prioritizing the important tasks of elder development, planning for the future, and shepherding the flock over numerous seemingly urgent concerns. Ibid., 36-43.

church who evidence the character and competency befitting the office of elder. Church

leaders who prioritize elder-development will regularly have their eyes scanning the

congregation seeking men who evidence some of the qualifications for eldership before

any formal training or appointment to service occurs. Dever writes,

> Gathering elders by recognition enables us to spot those men in the congregation who are actually proving by their lifestyle that they are elders in deed, even if not in title. Their actions give evidence that God is raising them up for leadership in the church, and their selfless concern for the church's corporate life tips us off that they have an elder's outlook and maturity. These are the best kind of men to have as elders, because they view eldering not simply as an office to train for and execute, but also as a wise and godly way to live regardless of their official capacity.[20]

Given that elders are to exercise oversight "not under compulsion, but willingly" (1 Pet

5:2), it stands to reason that those who are identified for eldership should be those who

willingly serve the church and live godly lives prior to obtaining the office of elder. Men

who evidence prayerfulness, practice hospitality, keep their word to their own detriment,

show up early to church, stay late to serve, and sing with gusto in congregational worship

are the type of men who should be identified as potential elder candidates.

A man's aspiration to be an elder must not be overlooked in the identification

process. In addition to 1 Peter 5 which shows a man must shepherd willingly, Paul

writes, "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a

noble task" (1 Tim 3:1). A man must not be coerced into eldership, but must desire to

serve the Lord in compulsion from the Holy Spirit, not the arm-twisting of man.

Anyawible notes, however, that pastors may need to "*clarify and teach godly ambition,*

including the godliness of aspiring to be an elder"[21] because some men may believe that

it would not be humble or godly to desire a leadership office.

In identifying one's aspiration to lead, it can be helpful to differentiate the

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[20]Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 138.

[21]Anyawible, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, 51.

internal call to eldership from the external call of the church, both of which are needed to be qualified for office. Charles Bridges (1794-1896) aptly defines and distinguishes the internal and external calls to ministry:

> *The external call* is a commission received from and recognized by the Church . . . not indeed qualifying the Minister, but accrediting him, whom God had internally and suitably qualified. This call communicates therefore only official authority. *The internal call* is the voice and power of the Holy Ghost, directing the will and the judgment, and conveying personal qualifications. Both calls, however—though essentially distinct in their character and source—are indispensable for the exercise of our commission.[22]

The church has an active role in identifying and affirming elders, however, the external call must not trump the absence of an internal call (or vice-versa). Church elders are right to fan into flame gifts fitting for eldership that are recognizable in a man, but must be careful that such flame-fanning is not coercion or manipulation. If a man does not aspire to the office, then he is plain and simply not yet qualified to be an elder. The church is to be led by people who *want* to lead because God has impressed the desire to serve upon them and constrained them to the call by the Holy Spirit's leading.

The external call by which a church identifies, evaluates, and commissions a man into official service may vary in form. Merkle states that "we are never told precisely how to select our elders," but "whether we are convinced that existing elders should select new elders or we think that it is the responsibility of the congregation, somewhere during the selection process, potential elders must be examined."[23] Through examination, or testing, as it is often called, the church community attests to a man's fitness to serve as an elder. Prior to closer examination that will come during elder training, the identification of elder candidates should be viewed as an initial screening for a man's fitness for eldership. As Dever notes, those evidencing elder-like qualities with

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[22]Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry: An Inquiry into the Causes of Its Inefficiency* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 91-92.

[23]Benjamin L. Merkle, *Forty Questions about Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 199.

eagerness to serve have already cleared an initial threshold through their observable way of life.

Though Scripture does not provide a defined process for identifying elder candidates, it is healthy for the congregation have input at the identification stage of the process. If the congregation has been instructed in a biblical vision of eldership, and if nominations from the congregation are non-binding recommendations of potential elders, then involving the church community in the initial identification of elders is wise. Congregational involvement in identifying elder candidates affords more eyes in the hunt for elders, more relational proximity as an initial screen to candidates, and also serves a didactic function by inviting the church to apply the qualifications for elders from Scripture as they nominate. Congregational nominations for elder candidates should not be the final word on the external call of a potential elder, but they help inculcate the church's responsibility of the external call into the life of the church. Practically, a church can incorporate the involvement of the members into the identification of elders by having a regular, annual period of time (approximately one month) in which church members are invited to prayerfully nominate men in the church whom they believe meet the qualifications for elders. In order to remove external pressure of coercion to office as well as to allow for ample time for training for those not ready for office, it is wise to inform the congregation that names of nominees will not be shared publically after they have been received. Instead, all who have received a minimum threshold of nominations (i.e., a nominee receives 3, 5 or some specified number of nominations), will be contacted by the elders to establish a man's interest in continuing with the process of training and testing.[24]

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[24]Mandating that a nominee receives a minimum number of nominations such as 3, 5, or more nominations from the congregation is a matter of prudence. If a person is nominated only one time, in contrast to other nominees who receive multiple attestation from the church body, it saves the once-nominated man from the false perception that a broad swath of the church body views him as an elder candidate.

The results of the nominations, once received, will give the elders a gauge to help determine which men in the church appear to be standing out among the flock as elder-like leaders. The objectivity of tabulated nominations may reveal that a man they assumed would be a qualified elder is not viewed as such by the church family. Conversely, the nomination process may put a new candidate on the radar screen of the elders. It must be clear, however, that nominees may still be a long way away from receiving an official external call from the church, if a call is received at all. Though some initial thresholds have been cleared in the identification process, elder candidates must be further trained and evaluated prior to receiving a formal external call from the church.

Train Candidates

A third step churches can take to bring about qualified elders from one generation to the next is to establish a training process for potential elders. The particulars of the process may vary widely, but three components are critical to the fruitfulness of elder training.

First, churches should not place a timeline upon a given elder's training process. Placing a timeline on a training process is akin to setting a wedding date prior to dating—it circumvents *bona fide* evaluation. Instead of cultivating a training process on a timeline that treats the final training session as graduation to eldership, it is better for churches to think of elder training along the lines of the farm system used in professional baseball. Each player is drafted onto a team (identification), but once a player is in the farm system, there is no specified timeline for making it to the big leagues. In fact, there is no guarantee that a player will ever advance in the system. Rather, each player's strengths and weaknesses are regularly evaluated as the player is given opportunity to prove himself. The farm system provides prospects with ongoing feedback and assessment in the hope of training players to play at the highest level. Some players

require very little fine-tuning, while others take years to evidence the ability to play for a major league team. In a like manner, some men may need very little training, while others may spend years evidencing fitness for the office of elder. Not having a specified timeline for elder training serves prospective elders by giving them time to receive evaluation, evidence growth, and prepare to serve with excellence.

The second step of effective elder training is to start training men for eldership long before they actually serve as elders. That is, elder training should not be limited to only those who have been formally nominated by the church as elder candidates. Rather, elder training should include men who may be far away from an external call, often young men (though not necessarily young), who have been identified as eager, godly, servant-leaders. The absence of timeline-driven elder training frees a church to bring a much wider array of prospects into the farm system for eldership because there is no expectation of automatically becoming an elder because one is in training. To the contrary, it is in training that some men may realize that they do not aspire to the task, or they are gifted to serve the church in a capacity other than eldership. Just as the minor leagues may instruct a player in how much he must grow in skill to make it to the next level, so too, bringing a young man into an elder training process may instruct him in areas that he needs to evidence significant growth while simultaneously cultivating greater desire in him for the task of shepherding the flock of Christ. Anyawible writes,

> Faithful pastors will regularly encourage young men (including twenty-somethings) to include in their personal aspirations the goal of becoming an elder. After all, every characteristic that Paul lists for elders in 1 Timothy 3 except for the quality of being 'able to teach' (v. 2), should mark every Christian man. The pastoral challenge to aspire to be an elder is good and godly.[25]

Churches seeking to develop of long line of faithful men to lead the church will not hesitate to start the process of elder training early with young men in the congregation.

To use a different metaphor, elder training should be like tree farming. Some

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[25]Anyawible, *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons*, 51.

trees on the farm have grown and are ready to be sold and transplanted, but the farm also

consists of young trees, supported by stakes, artificially watered, and growing for the

future. If all the trees are the same age, the longevity of the farm is limited. By

staggering the ages and readiness of the trees, the farm is sustainable from year to year.

Likewise, those who are in elder training can be at different phases of growth and

maturity and can be free from pseudo-readiness that can be fostered by timeline-based

training. From time to time, some elder trainees will be ready to leave the tree farm and

serve as elders, while others will remain in the "nursery" of elder training and continue to

grow.

The third component of effective elder training pertains to the content of the

training. In order to be qualified for office, an elder must have godly character, be able to

teach true doctrine, and evidence managerial competency in the home and church. That

is, elder training should train the heart, head, and hands.

It has been often noted that the Pastoral Epistles emphasize a man's character

far more than his biblical knowledge or leadership competency in the qualification lists

for elders. And thus, a weakness of seminaries. Seminaries specialize in pursuing,

acquiring, and dispensing knowledge, which helps pastors grow in doctrinal precision

and truth. Yet, it is quite possible for a man to pass through seminary with flying colors

because he has book smarts, but his character has glaring weaknesses or his interpersonal

relationships make him terribly unqualified for the office of elder. Mohler extols the

primacy of the local church in training men for ministry when he states,

> Count me as one seminary president who believes that the local church is even more
> important to the education of the pastor. The local church should see theological
> education as its own responsibility before it partners with a theological seminary for
> concentrated studies. The seminary can provide a depth and breadth of formal
> studies — all needed by the minister — but it cannot replace the local church as the
> context where ministry is learned most directly.[26]

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[26]R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Training Pastors in Church," accessed October 19, 2015,
http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/training-pastors-church/.

Seminaries have served and will continue to serve a vital role in the edification of the church, but they are not equipped to determine a man's fitness for eldership. It is within the community of the local church that a man's character and competency must be evaluated and trained. How is this done? Through intentional evaluation and feedback from Christian community.

In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts the church to speak the truth to one another in love because in doing so, believers "will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." Yet, without close relational proximity to the church, very little truth-speaking in love occurs, which means that believers miss out on a God-given means of spiritual growth. Seminaries are equipped to give feedback on a person's ability to acquire knowledge by giving tests. However, there is rarely enough relational proximity in a seminary setting for teachers and students to provide meaningful truth-speaking to one another for spiritual growth. Just as a student's character can go unchecked in seminary, so too can an elder candidate dodge truth-speaking and loving evaluation in the life of a local church. For this reason, elder training processes must mandate intentional measures that cultivate relational proximity over time, which affords ample opportunity for speaking the truth in love so that elder candidates may grow in Christ-like character.

Relational proximity for character growth in an elder training process can be implemented in a number of ways. At the very least, each trainee should participate in an objective means of self-evaluation (i.e. character assessment), and should also have his spouse, or close friend if unmarried, complete an assessment of his character. Such an assessment—though subjective—is more objective in determining character deficiencies than an interview or other form of conversation. When an individual is asked to measure his character in a pointed, thorough assessment on paper, it is more difficult to dodge difficult issues than in an open-ended conversation. Additionally, the fact that a friend or spouse also evaluates the man's character, serves as a truth-serum in his evaluation. If he

is overly benevolent in his self-assessment, those who know him best will help reveal his character blind spots.

Once character weaknesses have been identified through assessment, the trainee then needs ongoing relational proximity to help him grow in specified areas. Each elder trainee should have regular meetings with another brother in Christ to whom he is accountable and with whom he is pursuing spiritual maturity. Paul Tripp argues,

> Personal spiritual insight is the product of community. It's very difficult to get it by yourself. Perhaps every pastor needs to humbly recognize that because of the blinding power of remaining sin, self-examination is a community project. Every pastor needs people in his life in order to see himself with biblical accuracy.[27]

Tripp goes on to describe the relational proximity necessary for growth as "intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven redemptive community."[28] Elder trainees must not neglect the ministry that is necessary for spiritual growth in the life of every believer. In order to grow spiritually, an elder trainee must be known intimately by someone else assisting him in caring for his own soul. Since there is no specified deadline by which a man must be ready for office, there is freedom to be honest about character growth, or lack thereof, rather than pressure to feign godliness in order to be qualified for eldership.

Some may object to such intense character scrutiny for elder trainees, but churches should not be ashamed of upholding high standards and facilitating intentionally intrusive community. First of all, the gospel frees every believer from ultimate condemnation for sin. The security that one has by faith in Jesus gives one the ability to receive admonishment, truth, and rebuke in a non-defensive posture. The fight for holiness is possible because of the justification Christ offers by his grace, and those who would be elders must know—experientially—how to apply the gospel to their lives in the pursuit of holiness. Elders cannot apply the balm of the gospel to the flock if they have

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[27]Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 73.

[28]Ibid., 84.

not first applied the gospel to their own souls. Second, men who truly aspire to the office of elder should not mind intense character scrutiny. Those who believe eldership is a noble office will be glad to have the relational proximity and scrutiny necessary to attain and uphold the office. If a man is not interested in being held accountable to his manner of life, then the training system has proven effective by revealing that he is not fit to be an elder. Third, a lack of rigorous character assessment in elder training will hinder an elder's ability to lead. Every believer has blind spots of remaining sin, which can be seen by others. When blind spots of sin go unchecked in an elder's life, he loses leadership credibility. For instance, a man might be a great leader, biblical teacher, and manager of his family, but be repeatedly tardy to meetings, lack self-control in how much he speaks, be harsh with his words, or spend his money unwisely. These blind spots in an elder's character may cause low-level resentment in the flock, and cause some to be skeptical of his leadership. Rigorous character assessment is aimed at bringing blind spots of sin into an elder's vision so that he can not only grow, but so that the flock can see his growth. Paul told Timothy to pursue godliness and to watch over his life and doctrine closely and that as he did so, "all might see [his] progress" (1 Tim 4:15). Some character flaws are minor enough that a man might be affirmed as an elder, but which are persistent enough that they cause distrust among the flock. If a man identifies such character deficiencies and habits through rigorous assessment in elder training, he will be better positioned for growth, the flock will see his progress, and he will have increased credibility to lead. A fourth reason that rigorous character evaluation is necessary in training is because the stakes are high. Paul tells Timothy that as he persistently watches his life and doctrine, he will save both himself and his hearers (1 Tim 4:16). Certainly, Timothy's life is not the means of salvation, but his teaching and manner of life most certainly speak for better or worse about the nature of the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation. If elders are not rigorous in their pursuit of Christ, they may project a false gospel to the church and to those who do not believe. Strict character assessment for elder trainees is

responsible stewardship of the gospel of Christ and the church for whom He died.

In addition to character training, elders must be able to teach true doctrine and refute false teaching. Therefore, assessment of one's biblical knowledge, as well as training in particular areas of biblical content is also an integral part of elder training. It may be wise to incorporate a Bible-knowledge assessment into the early stages of the elder training process in order to get an initial gauge on a man's familiarity with Scripture. A battery of questions pertaining to basic Bible facts like the order of the books of the Bible, the content of the Abrahamic Covenant, and a timeline of the narrative of Scripture may not be pressing matters that an elder needs to know for congregational shepherding, but such an assessment will quickly tell the assessor and the elder trainee how familiar he is with Scripture. To be certain, knowledge of Bible facts can be a false measurement of spiritual maturity and, conversely, lack of precision in Bible facts does not mean that a man is unqualified to be an elder. Such a test is only helpful as a benchmark to facilitate future growth in Bible knowledge. Here is yet another reason why churches are wise to avoid putting a timeline on elder training. A man may be qualified for eldership in many ways, but reveal that he has much learning to do if he is going to be able teach Scripture accurately to the flock. The man need not be discouraged about his lack of Bible knowledge, but he does need to understand that such knowledge does not come quickly. Rather, a plan needs to be developed using any number of resources, including seminary courses, by which he can grow in Bible knowledge over time.

Once basic Bible knowledge is assessed, trainees are still not necessarily able to teach. A key component of elder training will be to instruct future elders in the gray areas—the disputable matters—of Scripture that frequently bear upon the work of ministry. Elders must absolutely be able to teach and defend the church's statement of faith, but they will likely be spending more time dialoguing with the flock about matters that are not of first importance, but which are disputed in the church and still relatively

important. For instance, elders should be able to speak with one voice from Scripture on matters such as gender roles, polity, marriage and divorce, the ordinances, money, worship, church discipline, and a host of other issues that are regular topics with very practical implications for a church's philosophy of ministry. Elder training should therefore include teaching, resources, and discussion about issues shaping the philosophy of ministry in the church which are not matters of first importance, but which are critical for unity of the elder body and the flock as a whole.

When an elder has proven, in the context of community and oversight in training, that he possesses thorough biblical knowledge, his ability to convey true doctrine should be tested by giving him opportunities to teach with evaluation. Elder trainees can be given opportunities such as teaching in Sunday School, leading book groups, teaching in children's church, leading small groups, speaking in worship gatherings and preaching. Such opportunities are not to be viewed as "sink or swim" moments where a trainee is thrown into the deep-end to see if he can make it out alive. Rather, feedback should be given prior to the teaching moment in order to help the trainee prepare to teach, as well as evaluation of the teaching afterward. Through evaluation and feedback of elder trainees, it will become apparent which men are ready to teach and which need more time and coaching in the farm system.

In addition to training which addresses the elder's heart and head, training should also equip the elder's hands—that is, his leadership competency. Kind men who know the Bible are not necessarily good leaders. It is required that an elder is practically able to manage and lead the flock of the church and this qualification is first seen in his management and care of his home. To shepherd the home and church an elder must evidence managerial competency in knowing how to exercise wisdom, uphold truth and grace, minister to individuals uniquely according to their needs, make priorities, and get tasks done in the spirit of Christ. Therefore, elder training must include practical shepherding opportunities wherein trainees can learn how to carry out the duties of

ministry as faithful stewards.

Training elders to be competent in ministry involves hands-on participation in ministry. Prospective elders can apprentice with current elders in a variety of ministry duties such as visiting church members, participating in elder meetings, sermon reviews, counseling (with permission), conducting weddings and funerals, prayer meetings, and many other tasks requiring leadership competency. David Csinos argues that Jesus used a hands-on approach to educating his disciples which is known today as *legitimate peripheral participation*—a term coined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wagner. Csinos explains:

> Instead of consisting of individual internalizations of data, learning is a situated process through which learners come to understand and participate in a community of practice. Information, therefore, is not so much the desired outcome of learning as it is the ability to experience full participation in a community by engaging in its practices. Through participation with "old-timers," newcomers can gradually come to experience full participation in a community of practice.[29]

In elder training, trainees should get legitimate opportunities to practice pastoral competencies with oversight and feedback from one who is already an elder. This hands-on approach, or legitimate peripheral participation, is often more effective as a means of education than mere data intake. Ed Stetzer likewise champions hands-on training, with a more succinct version of legitimate peripheral participation. Stetzer defines training

> I do. You watch. We talk.
> I do. You help. We talk.
> You do. I help. We talk.
> You do. I watch. We talk.
> You do. Someone else watches.[30]

Using this model, a culture of observation, discussion, and feedback can be created in the church which will afford elder trainees opportunities to lead in ministry. Through

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[29]David M. Csinos, "'Come, Follow Me': Apprenticeship in Jesus' Approach to Education," *Religious Education* 105, no. 1 (January-February 2010): 46.

[30]Ed Stetzer, *Viral Churches: Helping Church Planters Become Movement Makers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010)*,* 112.

legitimate peripheral participation, elder trainees need not fear being entrusted with responsibilities for which they are not yet prepared, nor will the congregation fear that unprepared leaders will be given too much responsibility too quickly. Slowly, within the context of loving oversight and feedback, trainees get hands-on opportunities to lead ministries, thereby developing competencies in a broad range of ministry functions. Each elder is gifted differently by the Lord, but it is crucial that every elder develop basic competencies in various ministry functions. If an elder is in fact the same office as a pastor, then there should not be a vast gulf of expertise between a full-time pastor discharging his ministry from a lay elder engaged in the same ministry task. The clergy-laity distinction which undermines plurality in eldership will only be perpetuated in the church if there is a considerable difference of competency between staff elders and non-staff elders.

Numerous options exist to faithfully implement elder training, but regardless of the specific methods used, churches are wise to use training processes which do not specify a timeline for elders to complete training, which allow men to start training long before they may ever be affirmed as an elder, and which address the trainee's heart, head and hands.

Public Commissioning

A fourth essential component of developing and maintaining qualified elders is the public commissioning of elders to service. After elder candidates have been identified, trained, and tested, the elders should then formally nominate the candidate to the church as a candidate for eldership. This formal naming of upcoming elders is a final threshold for qualification because it allows people in the church recourse if they believe that a man is unfit for office. The elders should request that if any person in the church has reason to believe the nominee should not be an elder, that they should make their reason known to the elder body. Once a stated amount of time has passed and the elders

have found no reason to discontinue the affirmation of the elder candidate, the man may then be formally commissioned in a public commissioning in the sight of the church body.[31]

At first glance, official commissioning of elders may seem like a mere formality with little significance. However, public commissioning of elders is a necessary component in maintaining qualified shepherds in the church for several reasons. First, the public nature of such commissioning carries implicit accountability with it. When a man is publically commissioned to a task, he then is accountable to the commissioning community for fidelity to his charge. Second, the public nature of the commission serves to inform the church of the addition to the leadership of the church. This new elder will now give an account to the Lord for the flock and the church should therefore expect him to be involved in the work of ministry. If the church does not publically name elders, it is likely that congregants will not know who they are. Anonymous elders can hardly be called shepherds who are among the flock, and congregants will likely find it difficult to submit to the leadership of men they do not know. Third, public commissioning serves a didactic function. The man being commissioned is exhorted to carry out the duties of eldership, the church is again reminded of the sacrificial call placed upon an elder's life, and a standard of godly leadership is once again set forth so that others can aspire to the call. Public commissioning of elders is therefore an integral component in forming and sustaining biblical eldership in the local church.

Remain Watchful

Once qualified elders are commissioned, the biblical qualifications of the

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[31]Congregationally governed churches will typically affirm an elder candidate by vote of the congregation, while other church polities may allow for appointment of an elder candidate by the body of elders. In either case, the candidate should be publically named to the congregation prior to appointment, and time should be allotted to ascertain that he is above reproach.

office should not be set aside. Rather, after a man becomes elder, he, along with the

church, bears the responsibility of continuing in godly living, faithful teaching, and

competent service. In Ephesus, Paul exhorts men who are already elders to "pay careful

attention to [themselves] and to the flock," and echoes this charge to Timothy as well (1

Tim 4:16). Elders must not see qualifications as a hurdle to clear in order to make it into

eldership, but as an ongoing vocation for their ministry. In a sermon from 1 Timothy 3:1-

8, Dan Doriani states,

> The overseer is responsible to persevere in personal maturity. Observe that whereas
> the list in Titus describes those who *will become* elders, the list in 1 Timothy applies
> to those who *are* elders. So becoming an elder is not like passing a Greek or
> Hebrew test, not like passing a lawyer's bar exam. You cannot cram, pass it and
> forget it. Of course, the idea of 'cramming for character' is absurd.[32]

Doriani's perspective not only reveals the necessity of observing one's character over

time prior to office, but he also shows that Paul's exhortation to godliness was for elders

already in service. The church must not assume that once a man is an elder, he has

transcended normal temptations and trials of the Christian life and entered a sin-proof

zone. Of course, nearly everyone acknowledges that all pastors are fellow sinners, but in

practice, pastors often receive minimal accountability. With indignation, Tripp questions

the status quo of pastoral culture and offers a way forward:

> Does it seem right and healthy that in many churches the functional reality is that no
> one gets less of the ministry of the body of Christ than the pastor does? Does it
> seem best that most pastors are allowed to live outside of or up above the body of
> Christ? If every pastor is, in fact, a man in the middle of his own sanctification,
> shouldn't he be receiving the normal range of the essential ministry of the body of
> Christ that God has ordained for every member of the church to receive? Is there
> any indication in the New Testament that the pastor is the exception to the normal
> rules that God has designed for the health and growth of his people?[33]

Tripp is right. Pastors (elders) are not the head of the body. Pastors are body, just like

every member of the church is a part of the body, and therefore pastors need the normal

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[32]Doriani, "The Profile of a Pastor," 71.

[33]Tripp, *Dangerous Calling*, 69.

means of exhortation, encouragement, prayer, and admonition that every member of the body of Christ needs for spiritual growth.

In order to maintain a culture in which elders receive the intentionally intrusive relational proximity Tripp describes for spiritual growth, the elders must recognize the unique hindrances to vulnerability and accountability for those who serve as commissioned pastors of the church. First, pastors often feel that they cannot be vulnerable with others in the congregation for fear that they will be removed from office if they confess personal sin. This fear becomes even more acute for elders who are on staff at a church, thus linking their livelihood to an appearance of holiness (so it is thought). The wise pastor will fear unholy living and hypocrisy more than losing a paycheck or title, but the pressure to appear qualified for the office must not be discounted as a practical hindrance to vulnerability. A second hindrance to vulnerable, intimate community for those who are elders is that in a "judge not" culture of hyper-tolerance, many people are hesitant to have intrusive conversations with others in the church, much less with those are in positions of authority. It is intimidating for many people in the church to engage in a vulnerable relationship, especially with an elder who has already received some measure of approval for his manner of life. Third, intentionally intrusive community can be hindered by the reality that some pastors are, sadly, unapproachable. When pastors get used to being "fix-it" men in the lives of others, they can become experts at deflecting and dodging personal accountability and soul care for themselves. Overcoming the defensiveness of another man's soul is no simple task, but doing so must be prioritized among the elders if the group is to have long-haul spiritual vitality (and the man is to remain qualified for the office at all). A fourth obstacle to the intentionally intrusive community necessary for soul care is that elder councils can easily become consumed with conducting the business of the church and end up ignoring watchfulness of their souls. Often, elder councils meet together, cover an agenda, and work from the assumption that everyone is doing just fine. With full

agendas, busy lives, and complex problems to address among the flock, it is easy for elder councils to focus on the more tangible, urgent tasks at hand than to carve out time to keep a close watch on holy living and true doctrine.

Elder teams who have no systematic process of ongoing watchfulness for the life and doctrine of each elder are setting themselves up for pastoral failure. Wise elder teams will mandate that every elder have relational proximity in gracious, intentionally intrusive community in order to receive the ministry of the body of Christ and maintain a life that is above reproach. Congregations will also do well to verify that such community is a priority among the elders.

Maintain Plurality

A sixth step that churches can take to develop and maintain qualified elders to lead the church is to maintain functional plurality among the elders. Many have made arguments for the biblical basis for the church to be led by a plurality of elders,[34] but mere plurality in office is not enough for a healthy leadership culture. Rather, *functional* plurality, as the elders relate to one another as equal brothers in Christ and as each elder serves a legitimate pastoral role in the life of the church is necessary in order to develop and maintain qualified elders.

Churches must beware of the tendency to have plurality of leadership on paper, while fostering autocracy in function. If the senior pastor wields power to lead the church as he sees fit, and the elder board only serves as a loose check and balance to monitor his job performance, plurality is a ruse. In fact, some churches deliberately choose a leadership model whereby "the elders have one employee,"[35] the senior pastor,

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[34]See Samuel E. Waldron, "Plural-Elder Congregationalism," in *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government*, ed. Paul E. Engle and Steven B. Cowan (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 187-221.

[35]Eastview Christian Church, Normal, IL, "Eastview Christian Church Elder Policy Manual," updated May 5, 2011, 1. Eastview Christian Church provided a copy of this manual at my request.

and that one employee is the "primary spiritual leader"[36] of the church. Such a model

sets the leadership up for turmoil by facilitating an adversarial relationship between

employee and employer, creating an imbalance of power where the professional's input is

deemed superior to the layman's. Worse, the model deprives the flock of the pastoral

care of elders sacrificially engaged in pastoring the flock because their focus is primarily

given to monitoring the pastor-CEO of the church.

When the church cannot see the elder team functioning as a team of pastors,

the process of developing qualified elders is undermined. If the pastoring in the church is

done exclusively by staff pastors, the future elders in the flock do not see a good model of

pastoring by lay elders. The church needs to see men who are construction workers, real

estate agents, and insurance salesmen, but who are also qualified shepherd-leaders of the

church pouring themselves out sacrificially for the good of the flock. Such men model

spiritual leadership and give future elders a template to follow as they aspire to office.

Also, when elders do not visibly shepherd the flock or lead in ministry, but serve as a

relatively faceless decision-making board, an uninspiring (and false) vision of eldership is

cast to the flock. Who can blame men for not desiring to be elders in the church, when

they cannot even name the elders in their church and when the job of an elder is primarily

to go to meetings to make budgetary decisions? Additionally, when functional plurality

is not maintained, a clergy-laity divide is likely to take root in the church. The flock will

come to the "professional pastors" with problems and view the service of other elders as

second-rate. One of the principle problems with such a distinction is that the burden of

the flock is too great to be borne by a lone ranger. Plurality is intended to make the

heavy burden of the flock lighter and manageable by sharing the pastoral workload.

Further, when elder teams become one-man-shows, the church misses out on God's

diversity of gifts. Each elder brings unique gifts, perspective, and leadership qualities to

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[36]Ibid., 26.

the team which are necessary for leading a church of diverse sheep. Elder teams who

share the workload of pastoral ministry can offer more comprehensive care and skill in

shepherding the flock as the diversity of the elders' gifts are put to work throughout the

congregation.

Functional plurality among elder teams requires intentional cultivation of a

team leadership. First, elders must prioritize relationship with one another as Christian

brothers.   Hellerman recommends that an elder not be nominated for office until he has

spent at least a year attending elders' meetings and observing the culture of brotherhood.

He states that "deep sibling relationships . . . have proven to be the key to the whole team

enterprise" of functional plurality.[37] A man must not only meet biblical qualifications for

eldership, but must also share the vision of team pastoring as "a community of pastor-

elders who relate to one another first as brothers in Christ, and who then lead their church

family out of the fullness of that robust relational solidarity."[38] Secondly, functional

plurality is assisted when decisions which ought to be made by deacons do not take up

the time of the elders. If elders are to relate as brothers and to share in the ministry of

tending to the flock, then vigilance must be exercised to protect the elders' agenda from

decisions that should be carried out by deacons. Just as Moses had to delegate in order to

lead Israel well, and as the Apostles assigned men to oversee food distribution in order

that they may be devoted to the Word and prayer, so too elders must resist the ever-

present urge to manage elements of the church that can be managed by others. There

simply will not be enough time or energy in the elder body for shared pastoral ministry if

regular meeting agendas are cluttered with church to-do's that are better addressed by

delegated authority to deacons. Third, lay-elders must be given visible opportunities to

[37]Joseph H. Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013), 272-73.

[38]Ibid., 265.

lead the flock. If a church teaches that a pastor is an elder and an elder is pastor, but the

flock never sees elders and pastors interchanging roles, what is seen will likely teach

more clearly than what is heard. Non-staff elders, therefore, should publically lead in

worship services, through preaching, teaching, leading communion, leading worship,

praying, and participating publically in the life of the church. Even if an elder's speaking

gifts are less polished than those of staff pastors, intentionally creating a visible culture of

functional plurality is worth the price of public leadership that is not perfectly polished.

Elders should take time to explain that a culture of development and shared leadership

will mean that "rookies" will participate in leadership from time to time. The church can

know that such rookies are receiving feedback, and should be encouraged to celebrate a

culture of development as of greater worth than a culture of polished performance.

Fourth, elder teams can hold one another accountable for actively participating in

relational ministry among the flock. Elders can regularly report to one another about

what ministry they are doing among the flock. Some elders will spend more of their time

in visitation, while others do more one-on-one discipling, and still others will spend more

time engaged in counseling. Staff pastors will have more time to devote to the flock, but

all elders should be held accountable to ministering among the flock, so that the flock

receives the gift of multifaceted ministry from a plurality of shepherds.

Conclusion

Qualified elders do not grow on trees. They must be identified, nurtured,

trained, and maintained in order for a church to have healthy pastoral leadership from

generation to generation. Churches must not neglect the biblical paradigm of examining

a man's qualification for leadership over time within the context of the church

community. By teaching the church about elders, identifying elder candidates, training

men for eldership, publically commissioning elders, maintaining ongoing watchfulness of

personal character by the elders, and ensuring functional plurality among the elders,

churches will be able to enjoy the Lord's provision of faithful men to lead his church in godliness and truth.

CHAPTER 4

THE SHEPHERDS INSTITUTE

Training elders is both the responsibility and privilege of the church. Yet, in the perpetual struggle between the urgent and the important, the seemingly urgent tasks of church life often squelch the slower, long-term process of elder training. The Shepherds Institute is a repeatable process that can be used by churches to train and evaluate aspiring elders in pastoral ministry. Though the Shepherds Institute is not a comprehensive program capable of churning out fully-equipped elders, its nine-month curriculum allows churches who currently have minimal elder training to easily implement a training process that will contribute to the long-term health of aspiring elders and the churches they may lead.[1]

Preparation

Prior to the first meeting of the Shepherds Institute, the instructor must prepare for the course by recruiting participants, explaining the purpose and expectations of the course, and familiarizing himself with the material. The instructor will need to begin preparing for the Shepherds Institute by identifying participants two to three months prior to the course and then communicating with enlisted students regarding curriculum and readings no later than one month prior to the first class session. It is helpful to note that the nine-month timeframe of the Shepherds Institute corresponds well with a typical school calendar. Thus, holding the first meeting in September and the final meeting in May, while utilizing June, July, and August to recruit and prepare for the course will

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[1]The reader may obtain a copy of the Shepherds Institute workbook by contacting the author at andy@christ-cc.org.

likely work well for most churches whose programming tends to revolve around the school calendar.

Recruiting Participants

Two to three months prior to the beginning of the first Shepherds Institute class, the instructor should seek the input of the current church elders or leadership in identifying prospective participants. It is wise for the entire council of elders to work together to identify prospective students for the Shepherds Institute, lest there be an appearance of favoritism or "fast-tracking" individuals to church leadership. The current church elders should discuss and compile a list of potential participants, keeping in mind the "farm system" (see chapter 3) method of training in which men at different levels of readiness are invited into the training process. Since accountability relationships are an integral part of the training process, elders may want to consider inviting men who are already accountability partners to participate in the course together.[2] The optimal number of participants in the Shepherds Institute is dependent upon various factors such as the number of aspiring elders in the church, the readiness of those who aspire, and the teaching capacity of the instructor. A class size between three and twelve participants is most likely to facilitate healthy dynamics in group discussion.

Once a list of potential participants has been determined by the elders, invitations to the Shepherds Institute can be sent out to prospective participants. A sample form letter of an invitation to participate in the Shepherds Institute is included in Appendix 1. Whether this letter is used is up to the discretion of the instructor, but if it is not used there are some essential points of information that should be communicated in the

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[2]It is not necessary that a participant in the Shepherds Institute meets for character accountability with another Shepherds Institute participant. However, the experience of pursuing Christ-likeness together may be richer if men can share what they are reading and learning through the course. Therefore, elders should consider inviting men who are already accountability partners to participate in the Shepherds Institute together.

invitation (whether written or verbal). First, it should be clear that the Shepherds Institute is not an automatic stepping stone to eldership, but a training process for those aspiring or inquiring about eldership. The end result is not that all who go through the Shepherds Institute will be elders, but that some will be better equipped to serve as elders, and that all will mature in faith, knowledge, and Christ-like character. Secondly, the expectations for the course should be clearly stated. All participants are to make attendance to one class meeting per month for nine months a priority. Additionally, students should expect to prepare for each class by doing up to 150 pages of reading, completing questions in the workbook, and doing one additional experiential homework assignment per month. Failure to prepare for class sessions will greatly diminish the effectiveness of the course. Third, participants should be made aware of any materials they may be required to purchase. It is recommended that churches show the priority of elder development by covering the cost for the workbooks and readings. The four books required for each participant may also be provided by the church, kept in a church library for loan, or required for purchase by each participant so that they can be kept as resources by the student. A fourth point to communicate to each invited participant is the expectation that all participants are required to meet twice a month with one or more other accountability partners. These two additional meetings per month are a considerable commitment, but are essential in producing the intended fruit of the training process. A final point of communication to those invited to participate is the necessity of spousal agreement to participate for all married participants. The time required for participation in the Shepherds Institute may require reduction of other commitments. Since an elder is required to "manage his own household well" in order to be fit for office (and free to serve the flock well), it is necessary that each married participant communicate with his wife about the priority of elder training and receive her blessing in the endeavor. It is far better for the man, his family, and the church he may one day lead, to postpone elder training for a later season if his wife would otherwise resent his participation in the

present.

After invitations have been made and participants have committed to the Shepherds Institute, the instructor should communicate with all participants regarding the meeting schedule, materials, and assignments for the first session approximately one month prior to the first meeting. It is recommended that the instructor find a regular time each month (i.e. the third Thursday night, or the first Saturday morning, etc.), and propose various times in a class e-mail requesting feedback. Once feedback has been received, the instructor should send out a meeting schedule with all nine dates for the Shepherds Institute so that participants can plan accordingly. Additionally, the instructor should explain how each participant can obtain the Shepherds Institute workbook, readings binder, and four additional books that will be needed for the course. The four books that students will need to obtain by the means determined by the instructor are (1) *Lectures to My Students* by Charles Spurgeon, (2) *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift that Changes Everything* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, (3) *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* by Mack Stiles, and (4) *Visit the Sick: Ministering God's Grace in Times of Illness* by Brian Croft. The instructor will serve the students well by e-mailing these titles to the class and identifying online sales or links to e-book bargains. Printing the workbooks and readings binders will require some expense to the church, but this expense is relatively small in comparison to the importance of training qualified elders.

Monthly Class Sessions

Once preparations have been made by the Shepherds Institute instructor, the monthly class sessions, accountability meetings, and experiential assignments will begin. Each class session will be slightly different based on that month's assignments, however, the basic format of each session will be similar. Since the men identified for the class have already evidenced substantial service to the church, commitment to the faith, and

aptitude to lead, it is assumed (and expected) that the participants are prepared to discuss the material for each class session. Thus, the format of the class is almost entirely aimed at group discussion based upon the readings and assignments completed prior to class. For this reason, the instructor will want to set up the meeting space so that all participants can easily see and hear one another by sitting around a conference table or in a circular configuration in a home.

A typical class meeting is two hours long with five segments, though some instructors may find it helpful to alter the agenda or lengthen the meeting time. The five segments of each meeting are (1) review, exhortation, and quiz (as needed), (2) workbook and readings discussion, (3) break, (4) finish workbook and readings discussion, and (5) presentation and discussion of "Hands-On" assignments.

The first segment of the class session will typically take only five to ten minutes and is aimed at review, exhortation, and quizzes when applicable. For the purpose of knowledge retention, the instructor can open the meeting with a few questions of review from the main content of the previous lesson. Then, the instructor should ask the group if everyone has been keeping up with semi-monthly accountability meetings and exhort participants if they have been uncommitted. This opening segment can also be a time to ask group members open-ended questions about the nature and effect of the semi-monthly accountability meetings. Additionally, the opening segment is a good time take the Biblical Knowledge Test (appendix 8) when doing lessons one and nine, as well as pop-quizzes on the key points from the current lesson as a way to encourage retention from the readings and segue into the material.

The second and fourth segments of the class will comprise the majority of the class and be dedicated to group discussion through the workbook and readings. The framework of this time is straight-forward: the instructor will lead students through the workbook material, questions, and readings in the order they appear in each chapter of the workbook. The amount of time spent on each question and article will vary widely

depending on the comprehension of the group, the applicability of the material to the local church context, and the interest of the students. The instructor will need to be well-familiarized with the flow of material prior to the class so he can allow for beneficial tangents in discussion while at the same time ensuring that the key points of the lesson are covered.

Both the instructor and students should be aware of a few helpful tips to maximize the material each month. First, the instructor must determine from each lesson what information is most important for the class to retain given the local church context. Each lesson addresses basic elements of healthy eldership and ecclesiology, but each Shepherds Institute group will need to emphasize different points depending upon the ministry context. Second, all students are encouraged to mark up their readings binder with highlights, comments, and questions. Good discussion is fueled by active participation with the readings. Third, the instructor will want to show how theological ideas and ecclesiological principles practically relate to ministry. Church polity may seem like an irrelevant topic to students who have not been through the fire of authority struggles or church business meetings run amuck, but the instructor can make a topic relevant by adding real-life examples of his own to the material (to be sure, he must exercise discretion in determining what information is appropriate to share). The instructor's workbook, therefore, should not merely be completed in advance of the class session, but thoroughly marked up with emphases, examples, and questions for the group. Prior to the class session, the instructor will want to identify a point in the lesson that would make for a good break point in the content, and with an eye on the clock, should offer a break time midway through the lesson.

It may seem petty to emphasize taking a break midway through the lesson, and, indeed, there is freedom for instructors to lead the course as each sees fit. However, offering a break is an intentional way to create space for relational bonding and brotherhood to form among the participants. The instructor should give attention to the

culture of the elder training gatherings because that culture is likely to carry over into the practices of the elder meetings of the church. By offering some refreshments and some space in the meeting time for informal communication, the instructor is showing that relationships—not just biblical content—matter. Elders lead as brothers, not as independent consultants and the culture of brotherhood must be nurtured beginning in the training of future elders.

After the break, the discussion of the workbook material and readings will continue until the fourth segment is concluded with approximately twenty minutes left in the meeting. The fifth and final segment of the class session should be devoted to discussion and presentation of the "Hands-On" assignment from that month's lesson. Each lesson in the workbook concludes with a specific experiential component that participants are to complete prior to the class session. During this final segment of the class, participants will share their experiences from conducting sermon reviews, private prayer retreats, observation of elders' meetings, pastoral visitation, and other pastoral ministry practices. This final segment of the class serves to reinforce the practical applicability of the content that has been covered in the lesson.

Lesson 1: Character

After ensuring that all participants receive the Shepherds Institute workbook and readings binder, the instructor will want to remind the participants that the assignments for each lesson should be completed prior to the class session, noting that some assignments are dependent upon on the contribution of other individuals and, therefore, should not be completed at the last minute.

The objective of the first lesson is to show the biblical emphasis on godly character which is required of elders. At a minimum, the instructor should emphasize (1) the character qualifications for elders from the Pastoral Epistles, (2) how the elder's manner of life should be worthy of imitation because his life is a means of teaching the

flock in godliness, (3) the biblical warnings and exhortations for elders to remain vigilant in the pursuit of godliness, and (4) the necessity of other believers in developing Christ-like character.

The "Hands-On" assignment for the first lesson is to complete the Character Self-Assessment (appendix 3), to have one's spouse or close friend complete the Spouse/Friend Character Assessment (appendix 4), and then to complete the Character Formation Plan (appendix 6). The two character assessments should be completed prior to the Character Formation Plan, as they will provide insight for the Character Formation Plan. Prior to the first Shepherds Institute meeting, students should also consider whom they will meet with for semi-monthly accountability meetings. The accountability meetings can use the information from the assessments and the Character Formation Plan as a basis for pursuing character growth. It is recommended, though not necessary, that the Character Formation Plan be shared with the instructor so that the instructor can coach, encourage, and pray for the students in the pursuit of more Christ-like character.

The table of readings from each chapter is a tool that instructors can use as a quick reference guide to view key points from each reading.

Table 1. Lesson 1 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9	The emphasis of these passages is on godly character which falls under the overarching qualification that an elder be above reproach.
Luke 6:40; 1 Cor 4:14-17, 11:1; 1 Thess 1:4-7; Phil 3:17	These verses show examples of imitating one's way of life as a means of discipleship.

Table 1 continued

Text	Points of Emphasis
"The Minister's Self Watch" from *Lectures to My Students* by Charles Spurgeon	God is not limited by unholy ministers, but his usual means of building up the church is to use the holiness of minister's life for the edification of the flock. Those in leadership offices in the church should first examine themselves to see if they are in the faith.
1 Tim 5:22-25	Elders should not be commissioned into service hastily. Time in community reveals one's character.
"Allowing Ministry to Replace Jesus" from *Mistakes Leaders Make* by Dave Kraft	Church leaders can easily fail to notice their waning affection for Christ. Service for Christ can be an obstacle to loving Christ.
"Joints and Ligaments" from *Dangerous Calling* by Paul Tripp	Pastors (elders) are not above the Body of Christ, but are in the body and need the normal means of ministry from the body. Hebrews 3 contains a warning that all believers can become hardened in heart due to the deceitfulness of sin, and therefore all believers need continual exhortation to holiness from others in the Body of Christ.
"Forty Leadership Accountability Questions" from *Gospel Coach* by Scott Thomas	This list contains questions that can assist in accountability conversations.

Lesson 2: Private and Public Prayer

The second lesson of the Shepherds Institute is aimed at teaching and

cultivating the priority of prayer in the life and ministry of elders. The seeds of pride in every elder's heart can easily grow into pragmatism rather than faithfulness when prayer is neglected. Prayerful dependence upon the power of the Lord to lead, nurture, and protect the church is essential in combatting the proud tendencies of the flesh while striving for lasting transformation in the life of the flock.

The lesson has three components: (1) the necessity of private prayer, (2) a theological basis for prayer, and (3) leading public prayer for the church. The instructor should begin with discussion about the personal prayer habits of the students, leading to the Spurgeon article entitled "The Preacher's Private Prayer." This reading can serve as a warning against the hypocrisy of having a public ministerial persona while lacking vitality of faith in private as well as an exhortation to increased private prayer. The second component of the lesson includes what is perhaps the most technical reading of the Shepherds Institute, "A Biblical-Theological Perspective on Prayer" by Graeme Goldsworthy. The purpose of this article is to provide basic theological tenets of prayer to form a God-focused perspective of prayer. An elder's theology of prayer will be manifest as he prays and instructs the congregation—for better or worse. The third component of the lesson on prayer is aimed at practical elements of prayer with an article about using the Lord's Prayer as a framework to guide one's praying. An additional reading, "How to Keep Your Spontaneous Prayers from Sounding Aimless and Shallow," helps elders scrutinize their own habits of public prayer.

The "Hands-On" exercise for lesson 2 is for each student to take a personal prayer retreat. The retreat should be an hour at a minimum, but preferably last for a half-day or more. Students are asked to complete the prayer retreat prior to the class session, so that the group can discuss anything that was learned or realized during these private times of prayer.

Table 2. Lesson 2 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
Matt 6:5-6	Public prayer without a habit of private prayer is hypocrisy.
"The Preacher's Private Prayer" from *Lectures to My Students* by Charles Spurgeon	Preachers (elders) should consider whether they are born again. Prayer is the essential power of preaching and preachers should pray not only before the sermon, but also for its effect after the sermon has been preached.
"A Biblical-Theological Perspective on Prayer" by Graeme Goldsworthy	Union with Christ is the only means by which we may approach the Father in prayer. The OT ministries of intercession point to the perfect intercession of the true Son on our behalf. God has revealed the big picture of his plan to us, but we pray into existence the details of how he accomplishes his goal.
"The Prayer of Prayers" from *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Timothy Keller	The Lord's Prayer is given to the church as a framework to guide personal and communal prayer. Prayer is explicitly intended by God to be a communal activity.
"How to Keep Your Spontaneous Prayers from Sounding Aimless and Shallow" by Brian Davis	Elders indirectly teach theology through the act of praying and should examine carefully their habits of public prayer.

Lesson 3: Expository Preaching

As watchmen who will give an account for the health of the flock entrusted to them, elders must know what makes for healthy preaching and teaching. Lesson 3 helps elders understand the task of feeding the flock with the Word of God as well as what kind

of preaching is truly healthy for the church. Expository preaching is defined and differentiated from other methods of preaching and common ways preachers mishandle the Word are identified. The lesson defines the meaning of expository preaching, the practice of contextualization, and the "fallen-condition focus," which is helpful in discerning how to proclaim the gospel from all of Scripture.

The "Hands-On" assignment from lesson 3 is to use the sermon evaluation rubric form in the readings binder to evaluate one of the sermons preached at the church during the month leading up to the third class session. Using their completed sermon evaluation rubrics, students will spend time discussing the sermons they have evaluated according to the principles of expository preaching explained in the readings. The instructor will need to exercise discernment in ensuring that sermon critique is constructive and given in a God-honoring spirit.

Table 3. Lesson 3 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
2 Tim 4:2-5	The Word of God edifies the saints and evangelizes unbelievers.
"Preaching That Changes the Heart" from *Saving Eutychus* by J.G. Millar and Phil Campbell	The power of preaching rests in God's Word, not man's. A faithful preacher needs only to "uncage the lion" of the Word of God. When pastors veer from expository preaching, it is often due to a failure to believe that all of Scripture is God-breathed.
"The Nature of Expository Preaching" from *Preaching for God's Glory* by Alistair Begg	Expository preaching is when the text establishes the agenda of a sermon. Good sermons answer the "so what?" question.

Table 3 continued

"Contextualization" from *Expositional Preaching* by David Helm	Expositors should be restrained by the reality of the text. Inebriated preaching is when a preacher leans on a text to support his own ideas. Impressionistic preaching is when the preacher begins with the needs of the congregation or the current of culture to craft a message, rather than beginning with the text.
"A Few Thoughts About Content" from *Why Johnny Can't Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers* by T. David Gordon.	Gordon identifies four common failures in preaching: moralism, how-to messages, so-called culture wars, and introspection.
"Obligations of the Sermon" From *Christ-Centered Preaching* by Bryan Chapell	By identifying the fallen-condition focus of a text, the preacher can accurately show how the gospel message arises from all of Scripture. A clear sermon has one unifying thesis, or main idea.
"Accept No Substitutes: Six Reasons Not to Abandon Expository Preaching" by D.A. Carson	Expository preaching edifies and protects the church in numerous ways.
"The Advantages of Heart-Changing Expository Preaching" from *Saving Eutychus* by J.G. Millar and Phil Campbell	The benefits of expository preaching are often realized only after a congregation has received a steady diet of exposition over the long-haul.
"Watch More Than Just the Splash" from *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search* by Chris Brauns	This sermon evaluation rubric explains that good expository sermons fire a biblical bullet with unction at the lives of the listeners.

Lesson 4: Plural Elder-Led Congregationalism

Lesson 4 is devoted to understanding church polity with an emphasis on plural elder-led congregationalism. The instructor should emphasize the three primary forms of polity throughout church history—episcopalianism, presbyterianism, and congregationalism. Additionally, the biblical basis for the offices of elder and deacon should be expounded, with emphasis given to the necessity of plurality among the elders. Further, the instructor should note the biblical passages supporting congregationalism as well as the theology of the priesthood of all believers as support for congregational authority under the leadership of elders. The final reading, an excerpt from *Embracing Shared Ministry,* may provide the most practical part of the lesson as it casts a refreshing vision for churches to be led by elders who serve as a brotherhood seeking consensus from the community they share with one another.

Lesson 4 requires students to complete the "Hands-On" experience of attending an elders meeting at Christ Community Church and writing down observations of the meeting. Students should scrutinize the appropriateness of the agenda for shepherding, the manner in which decisions were made, the brotherhood (or lack thereof) of the elders, and whether or not Scripture was authoritative in the decision-making process. Students who are unable to attend and observe an elders meeting prior to class session four, should still make it a priority to attend a meeting at some point throughout the Shepherds Institute course.

Table 4. Lesson 4 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
"Congregationalism" from *A Display of God's Glory* by Mark Dever	Matt 18 and 1 Cor 5 are biblical examples of congregational authority. Dever contends that elders best serve the church in making decisions that are serious, but not clear.

Table 4 continued

1 Pet 5:2-4; Acts 6:1-7; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13	Scripture supplies qualifications for the offices of elder and deacon. Elders are to serve with eagerness as examples to the flock.
"Deacons: Shock-Absorbers and Servants" by Jamie Dunlop	Deacons serve the church by leading ministries of service under the direction of the elders. Elders should exercise caution to see they do not infringe up the work of deacons and deacons should avoid making decisions that ought to be made by elders.
"I Move We Don't Vote So Much" by Greg Gilbert	Congregational polity works best when congregational authority is clearly stated and limited to major matters such as church discipline and membership, leadership installation, doctrine, and budget.
"Plural-Elder Congregationalism" from *Who Runs the Church: Four Views on Church Government* by Samuel E. Waldron	Waldron defines the four principles for congregational polity: Puritan, independent, democratic, and plural-elder led. The democratic principle does not mean that the will of the people should rule, but that the church has the right to decide the will of Christ based on the Bible.
"The Practicality of Plurality" from *The Deliberate Church* by Mark Dever	Dever outlines six reasons why plurality in eldership is advantageous compared to a pastor leading alone.
Excerpt from *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today* by Joseph H. Hellerman.	Consensus arises from loving community. How elders make decisions is at least as important as many of the decisions they make.

Lesson 5: Church Membership
and Discipline

   The fifth lesson of the Shepherds Institute has a surplus of material, as it covers

the topics of church membership, church discipline, divorce, and remarriage. Because

these topics call for much discernment and discussion in case-by-case application of

Scripture by the elders, this class session will be guided by case studies in which the

students seek to apply what has been read to various scenarios. Using the supplied case

studies (see appendix 11), the instructor can assign different cases to different students

and allow time for the students to formulate a response. Then, the instructor can lead a

discussion in which the students explain their case study, the group discusses the

response, and the instructor applies various points from the readings during the

discussion. The case studies not only provide practical application of the readings, but

they also show the students the necessities of prayer, biblical knowledge, and plurality for

elders to lead well in the tumult of real-life flock care.

   The "Hands-On" assignment in lesson 5 requires students to read "Track Down

the Strays" from *Church Elders* by Jeramie Rinne and then to consider prayerfully how to

contact someone from the church family who has been absent from the life of the church.

Students are asked to take some step of contact—a text, email, call, or visit—to express

the compassionate love of Christ to someone who has "strayed" from the regular

gathering of the church.

Table 5. Lesson 5 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
"An Important Mark of a Healthy Church: A Biblical Understanding of Membership" from *What Is a Healthy Church?* by Mark Dever	Meaningless membership is spiritually dangerous. It is possible to remove people from membership rolls, while retaining love and care for them in one's heart.

Table 5 continued

"Is Church Membership Biblical?" by Matt Chandler	Chandler shows biblical verses in support of church membership.
Excerpt from *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love* by Jonathan Leeman	Leeman lists biblical passages in support of church membership (Heb 13:7; Acts 20; 1 Pet ; 1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 5:3-16).
"Disciplining and Restoring the Wayward" from *Leading With Love* by Alexander Strauch	Jesus' command to "judge not" in Matthew 6 does not prohibit all judgments.
Matt 18:10-35	Confrontation of sin in Matthew 18 occurs in the context of Jesus' teaching on forgiveness and pursuing lost sheep.
"Tell It to the Church" from *Handbook of Church Discipline* by Jay E. Adams	When church discipline is told to the church, the elders must only tell the church members and must do so in a spirit seeking restoration.
Christ Community Church Constitution section III.D	Elders should be familiar with church policy on discipline.
"Divorce and Remarriage" by Geoff Ashley	Reconciliation should always be sought, however, Scripture permits two instances in Matt 5 and 1 Cor. 7 which may permit divorce.
"Divorce, Remarriage, and Pastoral Practice" by Andy Huette	The evangelical consensus on the biblical grounds for divorce is infidelity and abandonment. The evangelical consensus is insufficient to guide all pastoral practice, as it does not account for regeneration and repentance.
"Track Down Strays" from *Church Elders* by Jeramie Rinne	Elders have the responsibility of lovingly pursuing non-attending members. Elders are wise to see that there are numerous reasons as to why members may be absent from church.

Lesson 6: The Ordinances

The sixth lesson is focused on the theological, historical, and practical aspects of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The first part of the lesson is dedicated to examining biblical passages which explain the meaning of baptism. Next, arguments for and against paedobaptism are presented, with special attention given to Colossians 2:11-15 as supporting credobaptism, not paedobaptism, as it is often argued. Practical aspects of baptism such as who should baptize, whether baptism should be tied to church membership, and how to pastor young children who want to be baptized are addressed. After addressing the topic of baptism, lesson 6 focuses on various historical positions of the nature of the Lord's Supper (transubstantiation, consubstantiation, real presence, and memorialist). The purpose of a high-level historical understanding of the Lord's Supper is to familiarize elders with the differing views that are likely held by those who attend the church and were raised in various church traditions. With greater understanding of the history of the Lord's Supper, elders will be better equipped to shepherd individuals in understanding the gospel truths represented in the ordinance. In addition to the history of the Lord's Supper, biblical passages detailing the purposes of remembrance, proclamation, and identification with the Body of Christ, are also examined. Finally, the practical administration of the elements is addressed, with discussion being particularly aimed at the frequency of celebrating the Lord's Supper in the life of the church.

The "Hands-On" assignment from lesson 6 is for each student to watch a five-minute excerpt of pastor John Piper being interviewed in a "Gravity and Gladness" seminar about how to lead a worship service to have a vertical, or God-ward, focus. As elders lead the ordinances and other elements of public worship, it is necessary that they show sensitivity to the spirit of the moment and the diverse life circumstances of the flock. Piper instructs those who lead in public worship gatherings to give careful preparation to their words so that the focus of the moment can be God's glory rather than trivial distractions.

Table 6. Lesson 6 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
"The Meaning of Baptism" by Andy Huette	Scripture shows that baptism signifies multiple truths. Baptism is sign of cleansing, union, initiation, proclamation, commitment, and repentance.
"To Dunk or To Sprinkle?" by Andy Huette	Colossians 2:11-15, which is often used to justify paedobaptism is a passage that speaks of spiritual circumcision that comes through repentance, which is a conscious act of a believer.
"Baptism in the Context of the Local Church" from *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* by Thomas Schreiner and Shawn Wright, eds.	Those who are baptized should be instructed in church membership. Baptisms should normally be conducted in a regular worship gathering and overseen by elders, so that the ordinance retains its purpose of initiation into the Body of Christ.
"Letter on the Baptism of Children" by Andy Huette	Since baptism is a sign of faith, not salvific in itself, parents should continue to fan faith into flame in a child while he or she grows in understanding of baptism.
Excerpt from *What Is the Lord's Supper?* by Richard D. Phillips	Transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the real presence, and the memorialist view are the four primary historical positions regarding the Lord's Supper.
"The Role of the Ordinances" from *The Deliberate Church* by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander	Baptism guards the front door and the Lord's Supper guards the back door to church membership.
The Lord's Supper in the Context of the Local Church" from *Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes* by Ray Van Neste	An argument is presented for weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper based on the fact that other practices such as preaching and singing are done every week and that there is some biblical precedent for weekly participation in the Lord's Supper

Lesson 7: Gender Roles

The aim of lesson 7 is to equip elders to be able to articulate a biblical case for complementarian gender roles while being charitable to the egalitarian viewpoint. The church does not have the luxury of avoiding decisions pertaining to gender roles, as the composition of church leadership, preachers, and teachers evidences a *de facto* church position of gender roles. Given that complementarianism is counter to the tide of culture, elders will need to be able to explain the biblical rationale for gender roles "with complete patience" (2 Tim 4:2) in a manner that is fair to egalitarian views. For this reason, the first article is a defense of egalitarianism by a reputable egalitarian source, Rebecca Merrill Groothius. The aim of reading Groothius is to seek understanding of egalitarianism, and also to discuss some of the exegetical weaknesses of her position. In addition to reading key biblical texts regarding gender roles, students will also read a sermon manuscript preached at CCC on the much-disputed passage of 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Though elders need not have perfect conformity in biblical interpretation, it is helpful that they are aware of what has been preached to the church body in preparation for future conversations they may have on the topic. The lesson concludes with a creative polemic for complementarianism from Parnell and Strachan's work *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood*.

The "Hands-On" exercise from lesson 7 is for each student to visit the website of The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), to read an article, and to come prepared to class to brief the class on the article. The purpose of this exercise is twofold. First, the assignment is intended to raise awareness of CBMW's website because it is an excellent resource that the elders may utilize in shepherding the flock. Secondly, the articles on the site show that gender roles are not an ethereal theological concept, but instead have numerous real-life practical applications.

Table 7. Lesson 7 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
"The Bible and Gender Equality" by Rebecca Merrill Groothius	Groothius articulates common biblical arguments for egalitarianism.
Eph 5:21-33	Both complementarians and egalitarians use this text to justify their position. The indicatives of Christ's relationship with the church spawn the imperatives of marital roles.
1 Tim 2:8-15	Paul anchors his instruction about gender roles into the creation account.
"Men and Women in the Household of God" by Andy Huette	This sermon manuscript offers four contextual clues for interpreting 1 Tim 2:11-15 as well as five arguments for complementarianism with a word of caution against its abuses.
"The Glad Conviction" from *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood* by Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan	This chapter is a mock discussion that gives a defense of complementarianism based on the goodness of harmony, which takes different roles working together to make one song.

Lesson 8: Evangelism and Mission

Mack Stiles' short book entitled, *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* provides the main content for lesson 8 on evangelism and mission. The book is especially helpful for elders to read because it is aimed at forming a culture of evangelism within the whole church. Stiles gently corrects misguided evangelistic practices that are common within churches, and offers a compelling vision for evangelism by every believer in everyday situations in life. Rather than construct

programs and events aimed at sharing the gospel, Stiles exhorts believers to consider the

people who are already in their relational networks who do not know Jesus and to invest

time outside of the church walls in the lives of unbelievers. In order to form a culture of

evangelism in the church, the elders must lead the way by being evangelistic and on

mission in their own lives. Second, elders must celebrate and promote the right type of

successes in the church—namely, transformed lives—rather than the usual rubric of

attendance, events, and physical building spaces. Third, elders must guide the priorities

of the church by limiting programs in the church and encouraging evangelism outside of

the church walls. A key theological concept of the book is when Stiles rightly defines the

word "church." Rather than being an event, or a building, the church is a people. As

such, evangelism is not limited to bringing people to the building, but when various

members of the Body of Christ work together outside of the church to share Christ with

those who are already in their relational networks. This session also requires students to

read the Christ Community Church Policy Handbook, section D, entitled "Missions"

because the overseers of the church must be aware of the international missional aims of

the church not only to comply with church policy, but also, to fan into flame zeal within

the church to take the gospel to unreached peoples.

The "Hands-On" assignment in lesson 8 is to read "Taking the Great

Commandment Seriously" from *The Art of Neighboring* and to complete the exercise in

which participants are asked to name each of their immediate neighbors and to list any

other facts they know about those they have named. The purpose of this exercise is for

students to realize that there are often people living right next door who do not know

Christ. The exercise is also humbling for many who realize how little they actually know

about their immediate neighbors. After completing the exercise, students are asked to identify one immediate neighbor with whom they can prayerfully build a relationship in the hope of sharing the good news of Christ.

Table 8. Lesson 8 readings

Text	Points of Emphasis
Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus by Mack Stiles	The book is not merely about personal evangelism, but how to create a culture of evangelism in the local church.
Christ Community Church Policy Handbook, Section D, "Missions"	Elders must be aware of the policies and objectives established by the international missions team at the church.
"Taking the Great Commandment Seriously" from *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon	Elders are asked to identify unbelievers who live near them and to consider how they might be evangelistic in their neighborhood.

Lesson 9: Discipleship

The final lesson of the Shepherds Institute is entitled "Discipleship" and the lesson begins with a reading called "Worthy of Imitation," which is chapter two of this project. There are two reasons this reading was chosen for lesson 9. First, the reading explains how discipleship occurs by example via one's manner of life. Second, the reading serves as a complimentary bookend to lesson 1, which was about the character of an elder. In order for an elder to make disciples, he must be diligent about guarding and cultivating his own character. The second reading in this lesson is from Colin Marshall and Tony Payne's book, *The Trellis and the Vine.* Students are assigned the first four chapters of the book, but are encouraged to read more as they are able. The book sets forth a paradigm for ministry in which the "trellis" refers to the structures and programs

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that are used to facilitate spiritual growth. The "vine" refers to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit which occurs in human souls. The premise of the book is that most churches focus on trellis work because it's more tangible, more impressive, and much safer than vine-work. But discipleship is vine-work and therefore faithful elders must swing the pendulum of ministry priorities away from trellis work to focus more on the vine—the eternal souls for whom the trellis is built. Third, students are assigned the article "New Testament Commands to Practice Hospitality" from *The Hospitality Commands* by Alexander Strauch. This article shows that hospitality is a requirement for elders and that one of the greatest hindrances to hospitality is the human bent toward selfishness. The article also offers some very practical suggestions about how to practice hospitality.

The "Hands-On" exercise in lesson 9 is a pastoral field experience in which students make a pastoral visit to a member of the congregation who is in the hospital, in a nursing home, or somehow detached from the regular life of the church body. Instruction is given to the students in advance (at the end of class session 8), about praying for the Lord's ministry prior to the visit, preparing a Scripture or two to share prior to visiting, listening, conversing, assessing the appropriate amount of time to stay, and praying with the individual visited. A list of approximately twenty individuals from the church, with contact information, is distributed prior to this lesson so that the students are given guidance as to whom in the church family would benefit from and welcome a visit. After visiting the individual, students are asked to write up a short summary of their experience and come prepared to class to share what was learned.

Table 9. Lesson 9 readings

Text	Emphasis
"Worthy of Imitation" by Andy Huette	Jesus' teaching style, Paul's letters, and the paradigm for pastoral ministry set forth in the Pastoral Epistles all reveal that one's manner of life is a God-ordained means of discipleship.
Chapters 1-4 of *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-Shift That Changes Everything* by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne	Most elders work on church "trellis" because it is more tangible, impressive, and safer than the messy work of the "vine" (discipleship). The book identifies various "mind-shifts" that are needed in the church for elders to lead the way in making disciples rather than building programs.
"New Testament Hospitality Commands" from *The Hospitality Commands* by Alexander Strauch	Hospitality is commanded for elders as it is the fruit of being a living sacrifice in view of God's mercy (Rom 12:1-2). The article offers practical suggestions for becoming more hospitable.
Excerpt from *Visit the Sick* by Brian Croft	Elders are given practical steps about how to share the promises of God with those who are ill and may be facing the end of life.

Conclusion

The Shepherds Institute curriculum and class sessions are aimed at providing students with content that is rigorous yet still accessible to those without seminary training. The topics selected for the nine lessons are intended to give students a well-rounded theological and pastoral "toolbox" for frequent ministry questions and decisions they may one day face as elders. The workbook gives plenty of material for group discussion in class sessions, but allows the instructor flexibility in how to apply each

lesson to a local context. Ultimately, the Shepherds Institute seeks to train future elders by forming shepherds who possess biblical knowledge, Christ-like character, and pastoral competency.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

For years, the leadership at Christ Community Church discussed the necessity of training future elders, but this long-term need repeatedly found itself at the back of the priority queue. The time for concentrated effort on elder development was long overdue and the Shepherds Institute was a significant, needed, and successful step toward equipping future leaders of the church. Even so, the first iteration of the Shepherds Institute unearthed some improvements that can be made for the benefit of future Shepherds Institute participants.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of the project was to create a training process for aspiring elders by which men could grow in Christ-like character, biblical knowledge, and practical ministry competency through instruction, assignments, evaluation, and hands-on ministry experience. As shown from the life of Christ, Paul's example, and various exhortations in the Pastoral Epistles, faithful overseers in the church must be trained for the task of shepherding the flock of God. Churches with no intentional process of elder development put the mission of their local church and the spiritual well-being of the flock in future peril. The Lord can, and may, provide faithful shepherds without an intentional training process, but the regular means of his provision occurs when the baton of truth is entrusted to faithful men who can in turn teach others (2 Tim 2:2). Though some of the means for accomplishing the purpose need alteration, the overall purpose of training elders in character, knowledge, and competency is central to the ongoing health of the church.

A fruitful elder training process will not only equip those who are called to serve more faithfully, but will also help men discern their aspiration to the call. The Shepherds Institute affords the opportunity for men to gain a better understanding of eldership and to discern their gifting and calling without the pressure of a timeline to serve in the official capacity as an elder. Additionally, the three-pronged scope of training elders in Christ-like character, biblical knowledge, and pastoral competency is faithful to the biblical qualifications required for elders. Nevertheless, the scope may have been too ambitious to tackle at once. The purpose of developing elder character, knowledge, and competency should not be altered, but how each area is addressed may be improved.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

There were five goals of the Shepherds Institute and three of the five goals were met satisfactorily, while two of the goals were not met according to the stated measurement of success. Though I was initially disappointed that two of the project goals were not met, I have come to see that these unaccomplished goals still produced positive results and that not achieving these two goals is helpful in reconsidering how to modify the Shepherds Institute for the future.

The first goal was to identify and enlist ten participants in the Shepherds Institute. Eleven men initially committed to participate in the Shepherds Institute, but one discontinued participation after he had missed several class sessions and he committed to re-taking the course in the future. The eleventh participant was invited to participate because one of the initial ten men already had a strong accountability relationship with him and he evidenced aspiration to eldership in the future. With one dropout and one extra student at the outset, ten men completed the nine-month training process.

The second goal was to develop curriculum to train aspiring elders. The Shepherds Institute curriculum consisted of an eighty-eight page, nine lesson workbook along with a binder of selected readings for each lesson. Each lesson required students to answer questions pertaining to the readings and to complete an assignment related to the lesson. The curriculum was evaluated by three seminary-trained individuals with doctoral degrees and the goal was successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion (Appendix 3) met or exceeded the sufficient level.[1] The feedback from the curriculum evaluators was helpful and several of the suggested ideas and were implemented into the workbook material prior to its final publication. The lowest rated aspect of the curriculum evaluation came from Dr. VanGemeren's evaluation of the character assessment rubric. Well-versed in the Old Testament wisdom tradition, Dr. VanGemeren feared that the lengthy, scrutinizing character assessment could breed legalism rather wisdom. In a follow-up conversation to his evaluation, he explained that the character assessment may incorrectly assess the qualified elder who is disappointed with himself as he battles the sin nature within. Dr. VanGemeren also wisely cautioned against duplicity that may be engendered by the character assessment. With his feedback in mind, the character assessment was retained, but the concerns about legalism and duplicity were mitigated by giving greater emphasis in class discussion to the ongoing nature of character growth rooted in repentance.

The third goal was to increase Christ-like character development among the participants. Though this goal was not met according to results of the rubric (a minimum of 90 percent of the post-character formation plan evaluation rubric criterion did not meet or exceed the sufficient level), most participants indicated improvement in a targeted area

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[1]The curriculum evaluation panel consisted of Daniel Bennett (D.Min, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Kendall Coffman (D.Min., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), and Willem A. VanGemeren (Professor Emeritus of Old Testament and Semitic Languages, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School).

of growth. In addition to the need for increased emphasis in the course on Christ-like character formation beyond the first lesson, failure to meet this goal may also stem from a flawed metric. The goal is only successfully met if participants evaluate their progress positively on a rubric, and participants may be hesitant to give themselves a positive evaluation of Christ-like character growth, lest they appear proud.[2] Thus, despite the post-character formation plan evaluation rubric scores being less than 90% sufficient, the subjective report from students is that they did, in fact, benefit from the accountability meetings and emphasis on a targeted area of character formation.

The fourth goal was to increase biblical knowledge of the participants to foster biblical foundations for ministry practices. This objective was a strength of the training process, as the mean score increased 11.6 points from the pre-test to the post-test (out of 46 possible points). Since the absolute value of the t-statistic was 5.6722, which is greater than the two-tail t-critical threshold of 2.2622, and the p value of 0.000305 is less than p=.05, a null hypothesis can be rejected. It can be concluded that student improvement on the test is due, in part, to the instruction received.

In addition to the objective data, the consistent feedback from the participants was that the content of the course was challenging, beneficial, and helpful in preparation for various aspects of pastoral ministry. The students regularly stated that readings, content, and class discussions were beneficial to their growth in biblical knowledge of pertinent pastoral concepts.

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[2]For instance, one participant whose goal was to grow in prayer had the goal of praying for thirty minutes a day, every day. In his evaluation, he wrote that he "definitely grew in prayer" and "hit thirty minutes of prayer many days, but needs improvement." He gave himself an insufficient evaluation despite the fact that he grew considerably. Another participant whose goal was also to grow in prayer wrote on his evaluation, "I have grown in my consistency, but I hesitate in calling it 'sufficient.'"

Table 10. Biblical knowledge pre-test and post-test results

Student I.D.	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score
3798	39	40
7396	12	23
5142	24	40
6782	30	40
1861	3	26
6192	21	29
3302	18	29
5045	20	29
1110	19	26
5457	8	28
Mean	19.4	31

Table 11. T-test for biblical knowledge pre-test and post-test results

	Before	After
Mean	19.4	31
Variance	108.4889	42.0
Observations	10	10
Pearson Correlation	0.8049	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	9	
t Stat	-5.6722	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000152	
t Critical one-tail	1.8331	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.000305	
t Critical two-tail	2.2622	

The fifth goal was to equip participants for pastoral work as elders. While this

goal was achieved to some degree subjectively, the initial objective for successful

completion of the goal was not met. Initially, each participant in the Shepherds Institute was required to accomplish three pastoral field experiences (PFE) to increase pastoral competency among participants. The intent was then to use the PFE evaluation rubric to give feedback to ensure that all participants achieved a satisfactory level of competency on the PFE's. I decided to abandon the PFE evaluation rubric early in the Shepherds Institute for three reasons. First, I realized that with the farm system paradigm of selecting participants for the Shepherds Institute, not all of the participants were at the same level of readiness for PFE's. Some of the students took initiative on their own to get the PFE's completed, while others labored to simply get the readings and workbook completed. While I continued to encourage completion of the PFE's, I realized that Shepherds Institute workload was significant and I wanted to focus on ensuring that students focused on the readings and workbook questions. Second, I abandoned the PFE evaluation rubric because the best evaluation of PFE's came simply through group discussion at the end of each class session. Those who completed the PFE's would share their experience and we would talk about the experience as a class. Third, when I realized that I had no reasonable way to force participants to complete the PFE's, I began to see them as a type of informal "extra credit" that served to reveal eagerness and zeal for ministry in those who went the extra mile to complete them. One participant particularly caught my attention as he faithfully and thoughtfully put in extra time each month to complete the PFE and would come prepared to class to discuss his experience. Thus, the PFE's did not work as I had initially expected, but they still helped in training elders. With some modification, the PFE's can remain an integral component of the Shepherds Institute.

Strengths of the Project

While only three out of five of the project goals were officially met, the Shepherds Institute can still be considered a success in training future elders at CCC. The strengths of the project were that it (1) cultivated greater aspiration for eldership, (2) raised the biblical and theological literacy of future elders, (3) taught the applicability of theology, (4) instructed elders in godliness, and, (5) offered a real-life lab for evaluating future elder candidates.

As stated in the rationale for this project, CCC has been entrusted with a number of godly, competent, knowledgeable men who love the local church and the Shepherds Institute was, and will continue to be, a means for helping some of these men discern their qualification and aspiration to eldership. The Shepherds Institute allowed participants a front-row seat to the task of serving as an elder, and several walked away from the process with greater hunger to become elders in the future. For some, the biblical knowledge quiz, the character assessment, and the readings were difficult to complete, but the difficulty helped students see areas of needed growth. The Shepherds Institute set forth a calling that is lofty, yet attainable, and in doing so it fanned the flames of aspiration in the hearts of future elders.

A second strength of the Shepherds Institute was that the curriculum raised the biblical and theological literacy of the participants. Several of the lessons addressed topics that the participants were unequipped to explain biblically to others. For instance, church discipline, gender roles, divorce and remarriage, church membership, and expository preaching were all concepts that the participants had some knowledge of, but few were able to articulate a biblical rationale for each prior to the Shepherds Institute. The curriculum required future elders to do substantial preparation for each class session, but the degree of difficulty of the curriculum seemed to be appropriately challenging and doable for non-seminarians. The meeting schedule (once a month over nine months) also allowed participants the time needed each month to complete the assigned readings and

questions. Meeting once a month appeared to be the right pace to allow adequate time for preparation and more in-depth study than a weekly or bi-weekly course may have permitted. Growth in biblical knowledge pertaining to pastoral issues is likely the greatest strength of the Shepherds Institute.

Ironically, a third strength of the Shepherds Institute pertains to one of the goals that was not accomplished. Even though all the students did not complete the required pastoral field experiences, those who did complete the work benefited from their experience. The sermon evaluation rubric, which was generally completed in the month leading up to lesson 3 on expository preaching, helped future elders develop a more discerning palate for faithful preaching. Additionally, those who completed the second PFE (attend, observe, and write about an elders meeting), commented that the assignment was perhaps the most beneficial element of the Shepherds Institute. One participant observed a particularly interesting elders meeting in which the elders disagreed intensely, but with brotherly love, on a full agenda pertaining to church planting, contacting non-attending members, and staff salaries. The Shepherds Institute observer at this meeting got a front row seat to the necessity of elders working together as brothers seeking to make decisions with biblical wisdom. Though the PFE's did not factor as prominently into elder training as initially anticipated, they are still a strength of the project that will serve future elders well pending some modification.

A fourth strength of the project was that the training process helped current elders evaluate the readiness of future elders. Such evaluation was not a primary objective of the Shepherds Institute, but over the course of nine months, those who eagerly did the assignments, came prepared to class, and contributed to discussion with wisdom stood out among the group. As stated in chapter 3, elder development is like the farm system in professional baseball, and the Shepherds Institute provides the time and community necessary to evaluate who is ready for eldership and who needs more time to

develop.

A final strength of the Shepherds Institute is that it trains future elders in godliness. Particularly, the character assessments confront elders with needed areas of growth and help future elders see that they may have some work to do prior to seeking the office of elder. Often, a man may be a skilled or successful leader in some aspect of life, but have some glaring character deficiencies that make him unfit for eldership. Without a training process aimed at character development, churches basically have two options with such men: either they ignore the character deficiencies and approve unqualified elders to the detriment of the church, or the leadership giftings of such men are under-utilized because they are not admonished toward godliness and never become elders. The Shepherds Institute still has much room to improve in facilitating godliness in future elders. Even so, the emphasis on godliness as a qualification for eldership was a strength because future elders were confronted with the high calling the Lord has for overseers of His flock.

Weaknesses of the Project

The weaknesses of the Shepherds Institute tend to originate from the same troubled source. The initial scope of the Shepherds Institute was too broad and therefore, the students had difficulty completing all assignments and I had difficulty giving adequate oversight to the assignments that went beyond preparation for the monthly class sessions. The bi-weekly accountability meetings, the pastoral field experiences, and the ongoing work pertaining to a targeted area of character development were not given the attention or effort originally envisioned. The substantial reading load and workbook preparation each month made the Shepherds Institute take the form of a typical classroom structure, but the other intended means of growth were weaknesses of the course that need improvement for the future.

One of the primary means of developing Christ-like character in participants

was to be through bi-weekly accountability meetings. Some students were faithful in these meetings, but others were inconsistent. In lesson one, each student was asked to identify a targeted area of growth, to share this with an accountability partner, and to prayerfully seek to grow in this area through the encouragement of regular meetings. Students struggled to maintain accountability relationships due to a combination of several factors: (1) I could have placed greater emphasis on accountability meetings throughout the course, (2) there was inadequate lead-time for students to identify accountability partners, (3) it was difficult for some to make time for two more meetings per month, and (4) the potentially uncomfortable nature of accountability meetings contributed to the students' inconsistency in meeting together.

In addition to the aforementioned factors which were obstacles to accountability meetings, the Shepherds Institute could offer better resources for facilitating accountability relationships. While the necessity of community and accountability in the Christian life was established, little attention was given to the practical aspects of meeting with others for the purpose of soul care. Resources about applying the gospel to one's sin, confession, memorizing Scripture, prayer, and counseling one another could be added to the curriculum to teach future elders how to go about giving careful watch to their own lives and the souls of trusted friends. Further, the ongoing nature of accountability relationships throughout the training process beckons for ongoing discussion related to Christ-like character development throughout all nine class sessions.

Another weakness of the Shepherds Institute is that it tried to accomplish too much at once. Students enjoyed the workbook and readings, but admitted that it was substantial commitment each month to get the work done on time for class. The pastoral field experiences were then often disregarded due to a lack of time. Since the course does not count for any actual seminary credit, those who missed a pastoral field

assignment rarely went to the effort to go back and complete it. The concept of "Hands-On" assignments should be retained, but they should not be assigned at the same time as the readings and workbook.

Another weakness that was modified midway through the Shepherds Institute pertained to the applicability of the content. After the first few lessons, one of the participants told me that he would like to spend more time in the class applying the material to real-life scenarios in the class discussion. His feedback helped me realize that some lessons needed more emphasis on practical application. The classroom setting offers a prime opportunity to apply practically the concepts that have been learned, but the discussion in the first few lessons was aimed at merely rehashing the concepts that had been read. Thankfully, his feedback helped me correct the course of classroom discussion, and I was able to bring in practical case studies for the group to consider how to apply the material of each lesson. The case studies used to supplement lesson 5 have been included in appendix 11.

What I Would Do Differently

I intend to make four significant changes as future cohorts are led through the Shepherds Institute training process. First, I intend to only have three to five students instead of ten in the course at one time. Second, I will need to give greater attention and training to the accountability meetings. Third, I intend to remove the pastoral field experiences from the curriculum and include them in a second phase of the Shepherds Institute that focuses on coaching pastoral competencies. The fourth improvement I intend on making to the Shepherds Institute is to modify some of the questions on the Biblical Knowledge Test to more accurately reflect the content of the course.

Having a group of ten students in the course made for lively discussion, but a smaller class would be more conducive to character development. It is difficult to get to know and coach ten students at once in Christ-like character development in the course of

nine months while retaining normal pastoral responsibilities. In the future, I envision greater emphasis on character development with more interaction with each participant in regard to targeted areas of growth, application of the gospel in character development, and encouragement to persevere in forging accountability friendships.

For the second change, in the future I intend to incorporate more resources to give practical instruction about accountability relationships. I assumed the competency of soul care, but it is a competency must be developed, not assumed. More coaching, examples, and feedback is needed for future elders have meaningful, edifying accountability relationships. In addition to finding instructive resources pertaining to personal accountability, space needs to be made in the class sessions for discussion of character development throughout the nine months. I may lengthen the class time by thirty to forty-five minutes, so that participants can have one of their bi-monthly accountability meetings at the class sessions. Adding this accountability component to the monthly class sessions would also ensure that character growth remains an ongoing emphasis of the course. Christ-like character is the key qualification for elders and developing character must not be limited to the first lesson in the Shepherds Institute.

A third change that would be beneficial to the Shepherds Institute is to remove the pastoral field experiences from the curriculum and to design a "Phase II" that would be aimed at developing pastoral competencies through hands-on experiences. Potentially, a few students could be chosen from the first phase who exemplify aspiration and qualification for eldership and these students could be entrusted with some practical pastoral experiences in Phase II. This second phase could serve as an additional threshold for testing one's qualification for eldership, much as a player in the minor league farm system progresses through three levels as he is developed. Choosing only a few students to participate in Phase II would allow current church elders to give adequate attention to coaching these Phase II students in pastoral competencies such as elders

meetings, visitation, teaching, preaching, and counseling. Adding this second phase

allows more time to ascertain a man's qualification for eldership and it also would reduce

the workload for those participating in Phase I of the Shepherds Institute.

The fourth way that the Shepherds Institute could be improved is to modify the

questions on the Biblical Knowledge Test. Now that I have led a group through the

entire Shepherds Institute curriculum, I can better assess what content is covered in the

course and can now alter the test to more accurately align with the objectives of each

lesson. Some aspects of the Biblical Knowledge Test are intended to gauge a

participant's familiarity with Scripture independently of what is learned in the Shepherds

Institute, but I would still like to re-visit the test to add, alter, and omit a few questions.

Theological Reflections

The reading, writing, and study culminating in this project has challenged,

sharpened, and strengthened various theological convictions in my mind. First, this

project has helped me to understand the nature of authority. In hundreds of ways,

Scripture declares that God is the supreme authority over all things and Jesus the Son is

the authoritative head of his church. While reigning in heaven, Jesus has delegated his

authority to a plurality of pastor-elders, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and competent in his

Word, to tend his flock. Such a statement may be obvious to seminarians or pastors of

the same doctrinal ilk, but plural elder polity is a much-contested claim in the church at-

large, let alone in a world in which authority is often distrusted. I have come to see that

every human organization has authority structures, even if they are not explicitly stated.

Someone, or some group, *will* exercise authority in the local church. It may be a

business-savvy chairman of the elders, the helicopter parents of the youth group, the

organist, a well-to-do family, an autocratic senior pastor, or a plurality of godly elders,

but authority and leadership will be exercised somehow in the local church. Thus, failure

to address by whom and in what manner authority should be used is not only unfaithful to

the clear biblical teachings on pastoral leadership, but also organizationally negligent. Sooner or later, ships without qualified captains veer off course. Conversely, the use of authority by a qualified captain is a blessing to those onboard the ship. The authority of elders, rightly used, mimics the benevolent authority of the Chief Shepherd whose sacrificial service leads to abundant and eternal life for the flock. Rightly used, authority is a great gift, but when abused, it leaves a wake of destructive consequences.

Given the inevitability of authority in the church, and the biblical mandate for authority to be exercised by qualified elders, I have also come to see the duty of the local church to train future elders. Prior to this project, I did not see elder training as an essential component of faithful church ministry. Conditioned by either the culture or my own propensities, I would have defined successful church ministry primarily in terms of worship services, programs, and pastoral care. Now, I see that training future elders is essential for a local church to be faithful to Scripture. The normal means of God's provision of pastoral leadership is through training and entrusting the next generation to lead the church. That is, God uses training within the church to gift the church with qualified leaders. One of the Lord's means of protecting the church and keeping it faithful from one generation to the next is when faithful men entrust the truth of the gospel to other faithful men through pastoral training.

The project also gave me greater clarity in the doctrine of sanctification. The repeated biblical emphasis for elders to be watchful over their manner of life was instructive. Elders can be (and must be) "above reproach." Yet, being above reproach is not a static state. Elders must vigilantly watch their lives as a part of ongoing sanctification. Paul Tripp's exegesis and application of Hebrews 3, was helpful in seeing that if elders deprive themselves of the normal ministry of the body of Christ—what Tripp calls "intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven, redemptive

community"[3]—then elders will grow callous to the Word of the Lord and deceived in sin. Sanctification is a community effort and healthy elders will have a healthy distrust of their own indwelling sin nature and humbly participate in ongoing communal sanctification. This lone theological insight may be worth the effort of the entire project if it helps me and the elders at CCC remain vigilant over our own souls, thus guarding us from the deceitfulness of sin.

One additional theological take-away from the project pertains to church unity. Much of the material in the Shepherds Institute concerns matters of ministry and ecclesiology that are not of first importance. For instance, faithful followers of Jesus disagree on church polity, gender roles, preaching philosophy, and discipleship methodology. The Shepherds Institute curriculum considers various viewpoints, but does unashamedly advocate for a stated position on each topic. Some may see the Shepherds Institute curriculum as overly dogmatic, but the curriculum is not suggesting that every matter discussed is of salvific importance. Rather, it is designed to clearly state biblical reasons for various positions so that elders can engage one another and the church body with biblical and theological accuracy. Real unity in the church comes when we stand together in matters of first importance, and can charitably dialogue about disputable matters. Unity is not conformity, but unity does necessitate clarity in order to dialogue constructively with one another. Moreover, the elders do not have the luxury of *not* making decisions about disputable matters such a remarriage, gender roles, and polity. Thus, the elders must have clarity on the issues discussed in the Shepherds Institute so that, even if the congregation disagrees, they can clearly articulate a biblical reason for leadership decisions. The Shepherds Institute lands with conviction on matters that are disputable in the broader church so that Christ Community Church elders can have clarity

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[3]Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 84.

in ministry practices and foster unity in the church, even with those who disagree.

Personal Reflections

Working on the Shepherds Institute has been a gratifying experience for me because it caused me to prioritize a long-term project that contributes significantly to the health of Christ Community Church. This project fits into the "Important, But Not Urgent" category and is therefore a task that would likely have not been completed without the impetus of this project. Having time set aside to work on the Shepherds Institute for the edification of the church gave much purpose to my study and labor. The primary reason I entered the Doctor of Ministry program is that I was convinced that I ought to steward my mind for the sake of the church. I believe that the Shepherds Institute was effective in this regard and that the church will benefit from healthier leadership as a result. I am very thankful to be able to see the Lord's use of my study for the health of the Body of Christ.

The biblical basis for the project also had a significant impact on my life and ministry. My initial research question was, "What does it mean that an elder must be 'able to teach'?" But as I sought an answer to this question, I began to see the prominence of teaching by example in Scripture. I saw that, yes, an elder must be able to instruct others in sound doctrine through his words, but also that his way of life must instruct others in the truth of Christ. Researching and writing about the God-ordained means of instructing others through one's example has made me rethink how I parent, pastor, and lead the staff at church. Prior to the project, I believed the saying that "actions speak louder than words," but now I am much more aware that my actions are always speaking. The project has put Paul's words, "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ," at the forefront of my mind for the past two years and I see with greater clarity the primacy of my own relationship with Jesus Christ. Though it is cliché, I must first follow him faithfully if I am to lead others. I am a vocational talker (preacher), but my real

vocation—I now see—is to be a godly man.

Finally, as I complete this project I am in awe of the Lord's timeliness and providence in my life and for Christ Community Church. Long before I knew about the Doctor of Ministry program or had a research question in mind, the Lord was arranging my seminary studies to meet a specific need at our church. In September of 2016, the very time that the Shepherds Institute began, our church hired a young pastor, Kyle Romine, to lead a church plant from our congregation to a neighboring town. The Shepherds Institute afforded Romine and me the opportunity to discuss numerous theological and practical aspects of ministry and has greatly contributed to our alignment in ministry. In February of 2017, First Presbyterian Church of Chenoa, Illinois (PCUSA) approached Christ Community Church about merging with them in our church planting effort in their town. The doctrinal and ecclesiological differences between our two churches were substantial, but the Shepherds Institute had further equipped us to dialogue thoughtfully with this neighboring church on issues of baptism, gender roles, polity, and much more. Part of being able to articulate biblical conviction in a gentle, loving manner is simply being able to articulate one's position at all. Seminary study, culminating in the Shepherds Institute, prepared us with biblical and theological foundations for our convictions, as well as a general understanding of counter-arguments. In the end, a relationship of trust was built between CCC and First Presbyterian Church of Chenoa, and they decided to gift their building to CCC and the majority of the Presbyterian Church members joined the CCC church plant after leaving the PCUSA denomination. The Lord's timing on wedding together the implementation of the Shepherds Institute with Kyle Romine's hiring and the opportunity with First Presbyterian is a concrete example of God's providential care.

Conclusion

Designing and implementing the Shepherds Institute for the health of the

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church has been a great privilege. Though there are many possible ways to train future elders in biblical knowledge, Christ-like character, and pastoral competency, the Shepherds Institute is a good fit for the context at Christ Community Church and a definite step in the right direction of elder training. It's my hope that the Lord will use the Shepherds Institute as a tool to train "faithful men who will be able to teach others" (2 Tim 2:2) not only at CCC, but in other churches as well.

APPENDIX 1

THE SHEPHERDS INSTITUTE INVITATION

Timothy received a letter from his pastoral mentor, Paul, which read, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:22). We believe that the task of identifying, training, and commissioning qualified men to pastoral ministry remains a primary calling of church leaders today.

To this end, the elders at Christ Community Church regularly pray about and discuss who the Lord has entrusted to us to train for pastoral ministry. We have noticed that you are regularly involved in the life of the church, are serving the Lord in various capacities, and have exemplified godly character. We would like you to prayerfully consider whether you are now led to pursue further training in pastoral leadership by participating in the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church. Participation in the Shepherds Institute does not mean that you are leaving your day job to become a full-time vocational pastor, that you'll be an elder someday, or that you'll ever have an official role in the church. Rather, your participation in the Shepherds Institute is a means of learning about pastor/elder ministry, growing in Christ-like character, and participating in ministry so that you may be better equipped to serve the body of Christ in whatever role the Lord may lead you to in the future.

The Shepherds Institute will take work, so it is wise for you to "count the cost" of participating up front. If you participate, you should expect:

1. To attend a two-hour class session each month for nine consecutive months.

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2. To read up to 150 pages per month in preparation for the class session.
3. To meet two times per month with an accountability partner or group for the purpose of developing Christ-like character.

4. To complete three pastoral field experiences.

Space is limited to ten participants in the Shepherds Institute, so please prayerfully

consider your commitment. If you would like to participate in the Shepherds Institute,

please complete and return the attached application.

Grace and Peace,

The Elders of Christ Community Church of Gridley

APPENDIX 2

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The Shepherds Institute Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The content covered in the nine lessons addresses topics which are essential to pastoral competency.					
The objectives of the lessons are clearly stated.					
The biblical texts addressed throughout the material are accurately interpreted.					
The lessons contain points of practical application.					
The assigned reading material is well chosen to supplement the biblical basis and/or practical application of the lesson.					
The pastoral field experiences provide meaningful learning opportunities.					
The character assessment accurately reflects a biblical standard of godly character.					

Additional Curriculum Evaluation Questions

1. Which lesson needs the greatest amount of improvement? Why?

2. Which lesson did you find to be the strongest? Why?

3. What improvements would you suggest to improve the pastoral field experiences?

4. What suggestions to you have to improve the supplemental reading?

5. What additional biblical texts should be added to strengthen the material?

6. What suggestions do you have to improve the process for Christ-like character development?

CHARACTER SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist in Christ-like character development, which is essential for any man to qualify for the office of elder. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

Part 1

1. Do you consider yourself to be a Christian?

___ A. Yes
___ B. No

2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?

___ A. Yes
___ B. No

3. Have you been baptized as a believer?

___ A. Yes
___ B. No

Part 2

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

1. People outside of my church know I am a disciple of Jesus.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2. I "do not let any unwholesome talk come out of my mouth" (Eph 4:29).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3. I rarely gossip.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

4. I demonstrate self-control in my eating habits.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

5. I deny myself for the sake of Christ.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

6. I have a regular habit of physical exercise.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. I am a sinful man, yet there are no significant patterns of ongoing sin in my life that
    would bring shame upon the name of Christ or His Church, were my sin exposed.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

8. Those who know me well would say that I am humble.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. I either do not drink alcohol or I only drink in a moderate manner (i.e. drinking
    does not prohibit me from legally driving a car).

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. I spend money with an eternal perspective.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. I regularly drive an automobile in such a manner so that if a police offer were present, I would not get pulled over for speeding.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I rarely use a harsh tone of voice.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. I turn my eyes from sexually provocative images.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. I get a healthy amount of sleep—neither too little nor too much. .

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. I am not given to worry or anxiety.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. Those who know my work habits would consider me a hard worker.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. Those who know my work habits would say that I seek to do excellent work.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I have a weekly pattern of Sabbath.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I regularly read spiritually edifying books.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I am punctual.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I am content.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I am not enslaved to any substances such as, but not limited to, coffee, cigarettes, energy drinks, soda, or pain medication.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. I have a disciplined pattern of giving to the church.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

24. I invest money in missions.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

25. I am generous with my money.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

26. I am financially disciplined.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

27. I avoid compromising situations with women.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

28. I have self-control in how often I look at my phone (i.e. to check email, web, social media, etc.).

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

29. I have friends who are non-Christians.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

30. I regularly seek to share the gospel with others.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

31. My entertainment choices are pure.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

32. I look forward to Sunday morning worship.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

33. My schedule is not overly busy.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

34. I do not dominate conversations.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

35. I am a good listener.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

36. I show hospitality to those who are not my closest friends by inviting them to my
     home or engaging them in conversation.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

37. I rarely complain.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

38. I am not argumentative.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

39. I have a disciplined prayer life.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

40. I have a regular pattern of Bible reading.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

41. I am gentle in my speech.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

42. I do not have outburst of anger.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

43. I can speak hard truths in a loving manner to others without compromising the truth that needs to be spoken.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

44. I would not be ashamed for my internet history from the past year to be viewed by the church.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

45. I am a responsible steward of the physical possessions the Lord has given to me.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

46. I have self-control in the sexual purity of my thoughts.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

47. Those who know me well would say that I am teachable.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

48. I regularly confess my sin to the Lord.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

49. I regularly speak with a Christian man who knows me well, encourages me in holiness, and holds me accountable.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

50. I joyfully and faithfully serve church by using the gifts God has given me to serve.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Part 3 (For those who are married)

1. I have healthy communication patterns with my wife.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2. I have healthy intimacy with my wife.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3. My wife would say that I honor her and serve her.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

4. I pray regularly with my wife in addition to meal-time prayers.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

5. I pray for my wife.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

6. My wife would say that I am an intentional spiritual leader in the home.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. I encourage my wife.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Part 4 (For those who have a child/children age 18 or younger)

1. I pray regularly for my children.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2.   I use daily circumstances to instruct my children with Biblical principles.

       SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3.   When I sin against my children, I express repentance and ask for forgiveness.
       SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

4.   My wife would say that I'm an attentive father.

       SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Personal Identification Number: _____

APPENDIX 4

SPOUSE/FRIEND CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist in Christ-like character development for (name of participant), who is participating in the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be discussed with the participant only, and will otherwise be kept *strictly confidential*. At no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

1. He (the participant named above) lives in such a way that people outside of the church know he is a follower of Jesus.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2. He "does not let any unwholesome talk come out of [his] mouth" (Eph 4:29).

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3. He rarely gossips.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

4. He demonstrates self-control in his eating habits.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

5. His life demonstrates self-denial for the sake of Christ.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

6. He has a regular habit of physical exercise.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. He is a sinful man, yet there are no significant patterns of ongoing sin in his life that would bring shame upon the name of Christ or His Church, were his sin exposed.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

8. He is humble.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. He either does not drink alcohol or only drinks in a moderate manner (i.e. he could legally drive a car).

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. He spends money with an eternal perspective.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. He regularly drives an automobile in such a manner so that if a police officer were present, he would not get pulled over for speeding.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. He rarely uses a harsh tone of voice.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. He turns his eyes from viewing sexually provocative images.

    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. He gets a healthy amount of sleep—neither too much nor too little.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. He is not given to worry or anxiety.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. He is a hard worker.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. He seeks excellence in his work.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. He has a weekly pattern of Sabbath.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. He regularly reads spiritually edifying books.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. He is punctual.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. He is content.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. He is not enslaved to any substances such as, but not limited to, coffee, cigarettes, energy drinks, soda, or pain medication.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. He has a disciplined pattern of giving to the church.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

24.   He invests money in missions.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

25.   He is generous with his money.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

26.   He is financially disciplined.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

27.   He avoids compromising situations with women.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

28.   He has self-control in how often he looks at his phone (i.e. to check email, web, social media, etc.).

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

29.   He has friends who are non-Christians.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

30.   He regularly seeks to share the gospel with others.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

31.   His entertainment choices are pure.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

32.   He looks forward to Sunday morning worship.

     SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

33.   His schedule is not overly busy.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

34. He does not dominate conversations.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

35. He is a good listener.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

36. He shows hospitality to those who are not his closest friends by inviting them to his home or engaging them in conversation.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

37. He rarely complains.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

38. He is not argumentative.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

39. He has a disciplined prayer life.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

40. He has a regular pattern of Bible reading.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

41. He is gentle in his speech.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

42. He does not have outbursts of anger.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

43. He can speak hard truths in a loving manner to others without compromising the truth that needs to be spoken.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

44. He would not be ashamed for the church to view his internet history for the past year.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

45. He is a responsible steward of the physical possessions the Lord has given to him.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

46. He is diligent about pursuing a life of sexual purity.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

47. He is teachable.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

48. He confesses sin to those he has wronged.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

49. He has another Christian man in his life who knows him well, encourages him in holiness, and holds him accountable.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

50. He joyfully and faithfully serves the church by using the gifts God has given him to serve.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Part 2 (For the spouse of the participant in the Shepherds Institute)

1. We have healthy communication patterns.

SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2. We have healthy patterns of intimacy.

SD D DS AS A SA

3. He honors and serves me.

  SD D DS AS A SA

4. We pray regularly in addition to meal-time prayers.

 SD D DS AS A SA

5. I know that he prays for me.

  SD D DS AS A SA

6. He takes intentional measures to be the spiritual leader of our home.

  SD D DS AS A SA

7. He encourages me.

  SD D DS AS A SA

Part 3 (For the spouse of the participant who has a child/ children age 18 or younger)

1. He prays regularly for our child/children.

  SD D DS AS A SA

2. He uses daily circumstances to instruct our children in biblical principles.

  SD D DS AS A SA

3. When he sins against our children, he expresses repentance and asks for forgiveness.

  SD D DS AS A SA

4. He is an attentive father.

  SD D DS AS A SA

Personal Identification Number: _____

APPENDIX 5

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT INTERVIEW
QUESTIONS

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist you in Christ-like character development through the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Pre-Shepherds Institute Character Assessment Interview Questions:

1. After taking the character self-assessment, what are your character strengths?

2. Were there any results in the spouse/friend assessment that differed considerably from your self-assessment?

3. Considering the results of the self-assessment and the spouse/friend assessment, what areas in your life do you believe need the most attention in order grow in Christ-likeness?

4. How does the gospel of Jesus Christ affect the way that you will pursue growth in the aforementioned areas?

5. Considering the results of the self-assessment and the spouse/friend assessment, do you believe you meet the biblical character qualifications for an elder in the church?

6. What are some means that you can employ to grow spiritually in the areas you have identified as weaknesses?

APPENDIX 6

CHARACTER FORMATION PLAN

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist you in Christ-like character development through the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Character Formation Plan:

1. In a complete sentence, state a single area in your life in which you desire to grow in Christ-likeness. This will become your "Targeted Area of Growth" (TAG).

2. List three specific, attainable means you will employ in the next 10 months to mature in the TAG identified above.

    a.

    b.

    c.

3. List at least three passages of Scripture which apply to your TAG.

4. Explain how the gospel applies to your TAG.

APPENDIX 7

POST-CHARACTER FORMATION PLAN
EVALUATION RUBRIC

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist you in Christ-like character development through the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Post-Character Formation Plan Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The participant met with accountability partner(s) twice a month for 9 months.					
The participant fulfilled the first stated means for addressing his TAG.					
The participant fulfilled the second stated means for addressing his TAG.					
The participant fulfilled the third stated means for addressing his TAG.					
The participant can explain how the gospel applies to his TAG.					

The participant can articulate specific ways in which he matured regarding his TAG.					
The participant can articulate the biblical reference and content of three or more passages of Scripture which directly apply his TAG.					

Additional Character Formation Evaluation Questions:

1. Was meeting with an accountability partner/group beneficial to character development?

2. What are your plans for ongoing accountability for Christ-like living, now that you have completed the Shepherds Institute?

3. Is there a different TAG that you should now begin to address?

4. What means of character formation did you find most beneficial?

5. What factors do you believe contributed to the lack of progress in the TAG (for those who did not did not experience significant growth in the TAG)?

APPENDIX 8

BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE PRE/POST-TEST

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assist you in pastoral development through the Shepherds Institute at Christ Community Church of Gridley, Illinois. This research is being conducted by Andy Huette for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time*. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Part 1: All questions in Part 1 are worth two points. No partial credit will be given for incorrect answers.

1. List eight qualifications for elders which are found in the Bible.

2. Name two additional terms which are used interchangeably with the term "elder" in the Bible.

3. Name one qualification required of elders, but not of deacons.

4. What does the word "deacon" mean?

5. Name the Pastoral Epistles.

6. What is the situation necessitating church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5?

7. What are three common models of church governance?

8. Name the ordinances.

9. Define complementarianism and egalitarianism.

10. List three images used in the Bible to describe the Church.

11. Name the five core values of Christ Community Church of Gridley.

12. What two circumstances are deemed the "evangelical consensus" regarding biblical warrant for divorce?

13. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his followers that they will receive power from the Holy Spirit to be his witnesses. In which geographic regions will they witness?

Part 2: All questions in Part 2 will be worth 1 point.

Name the book of the Bible and the chapter in which the following can be located:

1. The Lord's Prayer _____.

2. A prayer prayed by Paul for the church _____.

3. A verse stating that "All Scripture is God-breathed" _____.

4. The Abrahamic Covenant _____.

5. The Davidic Covenant _____.

6. The Great Commission _____.

7. How to address a brother who has sinned against you _____.

8. Condemnation of the unfaithful elders of Israel _____.

9. The basic facts of the gospel which are of "first importance" _____.

10. Husbands are told to love their wives as Christ loved the Church _____.

11. A verse stating that salvation is by grace, through faith _____.

12. Support for the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers _____.

13. "Repent and be baptized" _____.

14. The church is called a "pillar and buttress of the truth" _____.

15. A call to pray for workers in the harvest _____.

Part 3. All questions in Part 3 will be worth 1 point. Fill in the blank of each passage of Scripture. No partial credit will be given.

Complete the following phrases from the Bible:

1. "For I am not ashamed of the _____, for it is the _____ of God for

    _____ to everyone who _____" (Rom 1:16).

2. "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses,

    _____ to _____ men who will be able to _____ others

    also" (2 Tim 2:2).

3. "How _____ are the feet of those who _____ the _____

   _____" (Rom 10:15).

4. "Let no one despise you for your _____, but _____ the believers an

   _____ in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).

5. "Shepherd the flock of God that is _____ you, exercising _____" (1

   Pet 5:2).

APPENDIX 9

PASTORAL FIELD EXPERIENCE (PFE) EVALUATION
RUBRIC

Pastoral Field Experience (PFE) Evaluation Rubric					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The participant completed PFE assignment 1 (sermon review).					
The participant completed PFE assignment 2 (elders mtg. review).					
The participant completed PFE assignment 3 (pastoral visitation).					

APPENDIX 10

PASTORAL FIELD EXPERIENCE (PFE)
ASSIGNMENTS

PFE 1: Sermon Evaluation
1. Read pages 83-127 in *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search.*[1]

2. Listen to a sermon preached at Christ Community Church and evaluate it by completing the sermon evaluation form pages 128-131 in *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search.*

3. Come prepared to the Shepherds Institute session 3 to share your sermon review.

PFE 2: Elders Meeting Observation
1. Attend an elders meeting at Christ Community Church.

2. Write a one-page review of the meeting, incorporating any or all of the following elements into your review:

   a. Were the items on the agenda appropriate items for elders to be discussing in oversight of the flock?

   b. Were the decisions that were made in the meeting biblically informed?

   c. Did you sense a love for God and a love for the flock in the speech of the elders?

   d. Was brotherly love exhibited in the tone, discussion, and attitudes of the elders.

   e. Did the elders listen well and speak with truth and grace?

   f. What strengths and weaknesses did you observe in the elders meeting?

---

[1]Brauns, "*When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search,*" 83-127.

PFE 3: Pastoral Visitation

1. Accompany a Christ Community Church elder on a pastoral visit a member of the flock. Observe the manner, counsel, and prayer of the elder.

2. Inform the Shepherds Institute instructor of a pastoral visit you would like to make. With the approval of the instructor, schedule and make the pastoral visit.

3. Write a one-page review of the visit, incorporating the following information in your review:

      a. Who you visited, where you visited, and the occasion for your visit.

      b. Biblical principles or passages you were prepared to share going into the visit.

      c. The primary biblical principle or passage you shared in the visit.

      d. Describe your comfort and ability to engage in conversation and to lead in prayer.

      e. What lesson(s) did this experience teach you?

APPENDIX 11

LESSON 5 CASE STUDIES

Membership

1. Jim-Bob has been attending the church for 4 years, says he's a Christian, evidences fruit of Christian faith, but does not want to sign a membership covenant because it's "man-made."

    -What is a pastoral response to Jim-Bob?

    -Is Jim-Bob allowed to play drums in congregational worship if he will not agree to the stipulations of the membership covenant?

2. You look at the church membership roll, and see that many of the names listed do not regularly attend the worship service. Below are some names, with basic information about each name. Provide a course of action for pastoring each member well while seeking to have a meaningful membership roll at the church.

    -Charlotte and Fred: They live nearby, but haven't attended the church regularly in over 10 years. They were active in the church back when their kids were young and in Sunday School, but no longer attend church.

    -Butch: He's 20 and in the military. He goes to weekly church gatherings on the base, but hasn't been to the home church in two years since he left for the service.

- Sally: Attended youth group in high school, was baptized, went to college and never found a church. She's now 24, and attends occasionally with her parents on holidays, but is not actively involved in any church.

-Romeo: Grew up in the church and has sincere faith and is living for the Lord. He's since moved to a new town, but has not yet become a member the church he attends. When he tried to become a member, the pastor told him that he must be baptized as a believer, not as an infant, in order to be a member at his new church. He's keeping membership at the old church even though he attends the new one.

Church Discipline

Provide a response to the following scenarios:

1. Alejandro is a member of the church who tells a pastor that he's engaged. He knows the pastor will disapprove of the fact that he and his girlfriend are living together so he doesn't expect the church to hold the wedding and gets married elsewhere, but plans on continuing to attend the church with his wife.

2. Reginald tells the pastor that he's moving out of town and that he'll need to withdraw his membership. A month later, Reginald's wife tells the pastor that her husband moved in with another woman.

3. Bobby and Bobbie Jo move to town, jump into ministry, and join the church with great enthusiasm. Two years later, they stop showing up to worship services. When contacted by pastors and elders, they say nothing's wrong, but that "life has just been hectic." They have not attended Sunday morning worship in 9 months.

4. An elder of the church runs his car into a store window on Main St. of the small town in which the church is located and gets a D.U.I. for the offense. He feels terrible about it, and word is spreading that he was drunk when he had the accident.

Divorce and Remarriage

Provide a pastoral response to the situations below:

1. Rhonda and Ronnie are not members nor attenders of the church. Ronnie stops by the church office one day to meet with a pastor because when he found out his wife was having an affair, a friend told him talk to a pastor. Ronnie leaves encouraged and continues to meet for pastoral counsel with a pastor for three years. He's come to church four times over the three years, but is not yet a believer. His wife has moved in with another guy and he asks if it's o.k. for him to get a divorce because the situation is confusing to his kids and he's fed up with it.

2. Brutus and Grace are members of the church. Brutus has a long history of verbal abuse to his wife. She can't take it anymore and moves out of the house. Brutus meets with an elder and says that he's really sorry, wants to keep his family together, and wishes he could conquer his anger. Grace is intent on filing for a divorce and has not spoken with any of the elders about her pursuit of a divorce.

3. Fannie and Freddie are an engaged couple who have regularly attended the church for a year together. They ask to have their wedding in the church and for a pastor from the church to officiate. Freddie explains that he is divorced and left his ex-wife for another woman, but it didn't pan out. He looks back on it as a mistake he made in a time of sin before he was a believer, but Freddie's ex-wife is still unmarried and attends another church in town. Should the church sanction this remarriage?

4. Leonardo is caught in an affair by his wife, Beyoncé and it's not the first time it's happened. She tells him that she is not going to make the same mistake she made last time by taking him back. She's done. They are both committed, long-time members of the church, and Leonardo comes to meet with a pastor and says that this time, he's really sorry for what he's done. Beyoncé doesn't seem to care and is meeting with a lawyer. Does she have a biblical reason for divorce?

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ABSTRACT

THE SHEPHERDS INSTITUTE: A TRAINING PROCESS FOR
ASPIRING ELDERS AT CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH
IN GRIDLEY, ILLINOIS

Andrew Kevin Huette, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robert L. Plummer

In order for an elder to be qualified for pastoral ministry, he must be able to teach sound doctrine not only through verbal instruction but also through his example of modeling godliness in his manner of life. Elders evidence qualification for office over time in the context of the local church and it is therefore the duty of the local church to identify, train, and commission elders in the noble task of shepherding the flock of God. The Shepherds Institute is an elder training process which can be utilized in the local church to develop elders through character assessment, biblical instruction, and hands-on pastoral experience.

VITA

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