



Editor's Note

by Chuck Gianotti

Run for public office? No way! The scrutiny that elected leaders are under (in the U.S. and Canada) is horrendous. Of course, if that public dissection uncovers bad things about bad people—that is good. But, if it reveals bad things about “good” people (that is, people we like)—that is bad!

Yet, how can we really know anything about a politician other than the well primped, manipulated image portrayed through and by the media.

In the local church, there is no hiding behind TV make up, no media consultants or press secretaries. It is people as they are. And, if you have been in leadership for any length of time, you know that in the church the real person is not always the one you see on the

surface. The façade wears thin.

Elders, of all people, should strive for genuineness in their Christian walk. Part of that integrity of walk is to admit that “I don’t know everything” and “I am not gifted in every area.” With this kind of honesty comes relief and a burden: relief to know that God has designed a plurality of leadership to make up for my weaknesses; a burden to do something about those weak areas.

That is where ShopNotes comes in. Each issue comes with bite size help in the various aspects of being an elder. Read, enjoy, chew over, pray about what you read. And glorify your Heavenly Father by seeking to become a better elder. We trust this issue will help equip you in areas that need shoring up. 

Personal Life

A Shepherd's Heart

By Ross McIntee

It began like any other day. I back out of the driveway, head down the street, stop, turn right, my mind miles ahead at the work place. Suddenly I'm alert. The car ahead is stopped at a strange angle. The driver frantically running about looking under it, pedestrians rushing towards it.

A man races for the doctors office nearby. I stop, jump out and then see why. A small foot jutting out from under the car, a little body is jammed between the gas tank and the concrete road. He is trapped and very still.

A crowd gathers--suddenly a voice of authority from behind is heard. "Lift the car and pull him out." It's the doctor. In the distance a siren is wailing. The ambulance soon screams to a stop, its light still flashing. The paramedics jump out, lift the little form and place him on the stretcher.

Just as they are strapping

him down, I see a man racing for the ambulance. He breaks through the ranks of the curious, bends down for a better look and begins to sob, "It's my boy, It's my boy."

As the ambulance speeds away,

lights flashing, the siren again taking up its wail, one thought dominates my thinking. How did my heavenly Father feel that day

as He viewed Calvary and saw His Son enduring the agonies of the cross while bearing my burden of sin?

But now as I write another thought comes. How do I feel today as I observe

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To the elders among you,
I appeal as a fellow elder,
a witness of Christ's sufferings ...
Be shepherds of God's flock...

1 Peter 5:1-2

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Standing When It Counts

by Paul, The Apostle

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching

ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my

departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. *2 Timothy 4:2-8* 

Biblical Foundations

The Work of Elders—Overview

by Jack Spender

Alex Strauch has referred to elders as "hard working men." And so they should be. But what do they really do? Or to ask a question that is in some minds, what can ordinary men employed in secular jobs do without professional training and ordination from a seminary? It's interesting to note that the functions assigned to elders in the NT can be done well by ordinary men who love the Lord and His people. Actually, they might do the job even better than a trained professional because they are working as a plurality and are on the same level as the people of the church.

Looking at the big picture, I'd like to present a brief survey of the four great responsibilities of elders, before exploring the details of each in future articles.

The four duties of elders are feeding, leading, overseeing, and protecting the flock.

Feeding

In Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2, the elders are instructed to feed God's flock, making sure the people are getting a healthy diet of God's Word in the right proportions: milk for the babes and meat (solid food) for those older in the faith. There can be no substitute for proper nourishment if the new man in Christ and the assembly are to grow.

Leading

Hebrews 13 charges the people in the church "to remember" (vs. 7), "to obey" (vs. 17) and "to greet" (vs. 24) their leaders. Darby's translation of the Greek word "hegeomai" as "your lead-

ers" in all three verses brings this out clearly. The Psalmist, David, spoke with joy of the leading of the Good Shepherd in his life.

So in this age of spiritual and moral confusion, the power of a godly example and skillful use of the shepherd's staff (or "crook") are essential for healthy spiritual life and fellowship as the believers press toward their God-given calling.

Overseeing

Several passages, such as Acts 20:28, refer to the elders of the church as "overseers." The word used implies an authority to maintain order and harmony within the congregation. As with

wolf is the great enemy of souls and he will not spare the flock.

Here then, is the great work of elders in a capsule. This work, to provide food for the flock and direction for the assembly, to protect from disorders within and from predators without, is truly a noble work.

Pre-requisite

Yet, before a man can excel in the care of others, he must consider carefully the opening phrase of Acts 20:28; "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to the flock....." Observe three things.

First, overseers must pay attention to themselves, that is, their own spiritual condition, before they try to serve others. It is the principle of Matthew 7:1-5 about the mote and the beam in action.

Second, the priority which is laid down here implies that the quality of any work for God in public will spring from a quiet fellowship between the servant and his Lord in private.

Finally, this word is given not to "yourself" but to "yourselves," which reminds us that elders must always have as their first line of duty the maintaining of that godly harmony and unity among themselves which they would cultivate among the flock of God. 

Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock . . . Acts 20:28 (NKJV)

any family, problems can arise, and good food must be balanced with proper care and discipline. Nurture and admonition compliment each other. Both must be done in love and true love cannot be present where either is lacking. Elders are examples, but they are also responsible and accountable.

Protecting

Paul exhorts the elders in Acts 20:29-31 to also watch diligently for dangers coming at the flock from outside. The shepherd has a rod as well as a staff and, with spiritual wolves being on the increase in the latter days, this work of the shepherd must not be neglected due to misguided ideas about "love" and "tolerance." Behind the

"We need spiritually minded, sweat producing, worked to the knuckles, level headed leaders who are going for

Shepherding The Sick

by Chuck Gianotti

In previous issues, we looked at basic etiquette and the need to listen when visiting Christians who are sick. Now we are ready to consider how to share spiritually with them.

Keeping in mind that “love is patient,” we should not rush to declare a solution to their spiritual need. Remember Job’s advisors! Having said this, we do want to provide a word “in season.”

A great burden is lifted from our shoulders when we realize that we don’t have to give a sermon or be a professional counselor. Our role is simply to help the sick person find the Lord in his situation. With this in mind, I always pray just *before* the visit, asking the Lord for humility, sensitivity and wisdom. These are basic for being a channel God’s of comfort.

Need for Wisdom

The Lord has promised the Christian wisdom in various trials, if we patiently trust Him (James 1:5-8). This

wisdom may be an understanding of the purpose for his suffering—that’s the “why?” question. Or it may be wisdom for handling the suffering—that’s the “how?” question—even if the first question doesn’t get answered!

The conscientious elder will study the biblical theme of suffering to determine both the reasons why God allows suffering and how Christians are to bib-

- *Hebrews 5:8* (obedience in suffering)
- *Deut 29:29* (some reasons not revealed)
- *Phil 1:29* (glorifying God)
- *Romans 8:28* (all things work to the good for believers)
- *John 9:3* (testimony to others)
- *Jeremiah 32:27* (God is able)

Need for God’s Love

We cannot presume to know for sure what God is doing in the person’s life. But, one thing is certain, God loves the individual and he needs that affirmed. For this, there is an abundance of scripture you could share.. Psalm 23, of course, is the classic. But, you will want to develop a list of pertinent verses. I would suggest keeping a list of “comfort” verses on the blank pages at the back of your Bible. You can add to it when you come across new verses

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Everyone should be quick to listen,
slow to speak ... James 1:19a

lically respond. Some key passages to consider are:

- *Book of Job* (learning trust and patience 13:15 and inevitability of suffering 5:7)
- *2 Cor 1:3-4* (comfort that enables us to comfort others)
- *2 Cor 12:7-9* (grace & strength)
- *Hebrews 12:5-11* (chastening)

Wives’ Corner

A Woman of Temperance

by Mary Gianotti

In C.S. Lewis’ book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, one of the principle characters of the story gets carried away: “At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one’s mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive.” A lack of temperance lead Edmund to forget what he had been taught. He then gave into his desires causing untold grief to his brother and two sisters.

We are admonished as elders wives to be temperate (1 Timothy 3:11). Temperate or sober is defined as one who is self controlled or “sober minded” (W.E. Vine). This is a person marked by moderation, keeping or held within limits: not extreme or excessive (Webster). What an important and challenging qualification for women desiring to serve God effectively and wanting to support and encourage our

husbands in the work of eldering!

We all encounter stress, disagreements, heartaches and personalities that rub us wrong and those who disregard our advice. During these times it is most difficult to be well balanced not only in our reactions to others but also in our spirit. Despite a calm exterior, a boiling interior will eventually get the better of us. Like a volcano, the damage to others is inevitable.

Like Edmund, it is easy to forget what we have been taught. Internalizing truth is a daily discipline. Reading God’s Word in our quiet times with the Lord is good but be sure to take it a step further and apply it to our life. These truths become the foundation for developing and exhibiting temperance.

In addition, I have found it helpful to memorize a few key verses that help me keep an internal and external balance. For example, James 1:19 “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...” and 1 Peter 4:8 “Above all love one another deeply...” are a few of my fa-

vorite ones.

Abigail in the Old Testament is described as intelligent and beautiful (that was a bonus) and provides us an example of a temperate woman. She finds herself caught in-between two angry men: her husband, Nabal, who was irrational and evil and David, who was determined to justifiably wipe out her community.

She is a quick thinker and an incredible organizer. In 1 Samuel 25 :18 we find “Abigail lost no time...” She didn’t allow things to just happen to her, she was proactive. She did not give into her emotions of fear or anxiety but thought through her problem and came up with a plan.

Her plan was simple, be kind to David by feeding his men and make an appeal in a humble, polite manner. The influence she had in the lives of those around her was literally life saving. There is much to learn from her example. Having temperance means not going off the deep end when things get

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“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers ...”
1 Peter 5:2a

Editor: Chuck Gianotti
27 Watchman Court
Rochester, NY 14624-4930

Phone: 716.429.5435
Email: crgianotti@juno.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Spender
Bible teacher, Church planting

Ross McIntee
Elder
Short term missionary support

Mary Gianotti
Elder’s wife, Women’s ministry

Chuck Gianotti
Bible teacher, Church planting

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HOW TO REACH US

To subscribe, contact us at the following:

Elders’ SHOPNOTES
c/o 27 Watchman Court
Rochester, N.Y. 14624 U.S.A.
E-mail: crgianotti@juno.com
Phone: 716.429.5435

Feedback & comments are welcome.

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A Shepherd’s Heart *(continued from page 1)*

so many of my brothers and sisters weighed down under the crushing burden of life’s multitude of problems? What is my response as I see them hard pressed by the forces of today’s modern corporate giants or the hectic demanding schedule of home, school, extra studies, second jobs, staggered meals, plus church

responsibilities and activities, etc., etc.

One can hardly see the little hand or foot jutting out from under it all that cries out for help. Lord give me, as an elder, the heart to climb into the ambulance with him and ride along for a while. For after all, he may not be my boy, but he is my brother. 

Shepherding the Sick *(continued from page 3)*

helpful for comforting.

On the first visit, you might share a few general verses about God’s love and care. During subsequent visits, you will become more discerning of God’s work in their lives. Often, the person themselves will become aware of what God is doing. A good question to ask is, “Where have you seen God in your suffering?” or “How has God spoken to you through this?”

If they ask a question, like “Why is God doing this to me?”, a good answer might be, “I am not sure.” (Deut. 29:29). The person might just simply need to know that God cares for him through you. That may be enough to “provoke” (Heb 10:24 KJV) him to continue on.

Woman of Temperance

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tense. Being able to construct a plan of action in the midst of trouble rather than being paralyzed by your circumstances. Executing the plan in a humble and loving manner gives the Lord opportunity to work through us. This wonderful story ends with a theme of salvation, redemption and love.

If God used the temperance of Abigail who had a wicked husband, God will use temperate wives to be of great help to godly elders. (If you have never read the Chronicles of Narnia, which includes the book mentioned above, it is worth reading to your school age children or just for your own enrichment.) 

Resources

Finally, you might bring a tape of Sunday’s message, music tapes, pamphlets, etc. There are excellent “comfort” booklets available, which can be bought in bulk to reduce the cost. But, be sensitive—he may have already received 10 “special” books to read.

How often should you visit? A good rule of thumb would be that at least once a week. If there is ever a time when Christians look to their elders for spiritual care, this is it. If done wisely, sensitively and spiritually, visiting the sick can provide a great spiritual benefit. 

RECOMMENDED READING

False Intimacy, by Dr. Harry W. Schaumburg (NavPress, 1997)

One of the most difficult areas confronting an elder is the whole subject of sexuality. Often these problems are ignored, whether sex abuse, sexual addiction, homosexuality, promiscuity or infidelity. Increasingly these sins are creeping in to the church (and have been there for a long time!) This problem doesn’t just affect mainline churches, but evangelicals as well.

Dr. Schaumburg confronts these issues head on, focusing particularly on men. Anyone who has honestly dealt with these issues will readily see the value of this book. The goal is repentance and restoration. It is not an easy road, but it can happen with God’s help. The heart of the matter is a ruthless honesty with oneself.

This is an excellent resource for an individual struggling with sexual sin or for the elder who has a heart to reach out to others who are struggling with this.