



ShopNotes Online!!

Editor's Note

Great news! Due to many requests, Elders' ShopNotes is now online. Check us out at <http://home.rochester.rr.com/esn>. The current issue will be posted there as well as all the back issues in our archive section.

You now have the option to subscribe to the ESN Online. This means every time a new issue is ready and posted, you will get an e-mail telling you it is ready. From the web page, you can print all the articles from any issue. The only down side to this is that you miss out on the handy, attractively formatted printed version (that you hold in your hand).

Of course, you can continue receiving this printed version as well. You can even take care of subscriber issues or send in your comments.

In addition, ESN is now available in Spanish, thanks to the dedicated effort of David

Thompson of Colombia, South America. It currently will be available only in written form, but hopefully will be online before too long.

God has been blessing this ministry of ESN and we are encouraged by so many positive responses and subscriptions.

We want ESN to meet the needs of all you busy elders out there faithfully struggling to serve our Lord and His people. Please send us your comments and questions you would like us to address. We will do our best to provide solid, biblically based responses and articles. We want to scratch where you itch—so please give us your feedback.

The Lord bless you as you continue to draw your strength from Him. To Him be all the glory for ever and ever. *Chuck Gianotti* 

Biblical Foundations The Second Work

by Jack Spender

The second work of elders is to lead, which means "to go before" (this is the second in a four part series). David appreciated this aspect of God's shepherding care when he wrote the beloved 23rd Psalm; "leading" is the only verb used twice in the Psalm. Many people know that elders have this responsibility, but are not sure how to support it biblically. The Greek word "*hegeomai*" meaning "to guide," occurs three times in Hebrews 13, where the rendering "your leaders" is found in the NIV, NASB and Darby's translation.

But why not just use the word "elders" when referring to those who lead the church? Sometimes a wider term is needed. When the

apostle Paul visited an assembly, he would not automatically become an elder even though he worked closely with the elders. Also, a new assembly - which may not yet have recognized elders - is nevertheless not without leadership. This situation is implied in Acts 14:23 where new churches that Paul and Barnabas had planted existed for some time before elders were appointed.

We exhort the believers with confidence to obey or pray for their leaders as they await God's timing to publicly recognize elders. Thus, in reminding the believers of their responsibilities to those whom God was authenticating among them, the writer to the Hebrews uses this broader term: "your leaders."

What Makes a Good Leader?

Leading has some tough requirements. First, a man must have direction himself. This comes from years of experience in the ways of God, being led by

the Spirit and the Word.

Then, he must have the credibility to lead others; he must be a good example. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" wrote Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:1). One helpful way to understand what leading is all about is to think of the word "influence." Remember that leadership is not a spiritual gift, but part of every elder's work regardless of his individual gifts and abilities. Of course this applies as well to other Christian servants who have godly influence with people.

Learning to communicate clearly, dealing with difficult situations promptly, and working well with others are essentials for good leading. Being a team

player is very important in assembly life, for in nothing is the statement so true "in the multitude of counselors there is safety," (Prov 11:14) as in leadership.

Good leaders know how to be gentle, for "the servant of the Lord must not strive" (2 Tim 2:25). Direction in the work must not be sustained at the expense of a humble servant spirit. Peter exhorts the elders not to lord it over God's heritage, but to be examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:3). Even taking the title of "leader" was for-

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*Be ye followers of me,
even as I also am of Christ.*
1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV)

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Practical Ministry

Conducting a Baptism

by Chuck Gianotti

I want to be baptized! This is probably one of the most exciting things an elder can hear. What do you do next?

First, an interview with the one wanting to be baptized will help you learn more about his understanding of salvation and baptism. You may want to have him do a study on baptism before you meet (see Resource Reading for a suggestion).

Questions to ask

- 1) Why does he want to be baptized?
- 2) Is he genuinely a believer in Christ? In a word, does he have a credible testimony?

His answers will give you a good idea of his spiritual state. People can have various reasons for wanting to be baptized: family or peer pressure, thinking it will help get them to heaven, it's "the thing to do," etc.

If in doubt about the genuineness of their faith, a well tested question that can clarify things is the following: "If you were to die today and God were to say, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' How would you respond?"

Keep in mind, some people become nervous when interviewed and have difficulty expressing themselves. Wisdom and tact will serve you well here. Be careful about expecting stock phrases like "Christian", "saved", etc. If these terms are used, make sure they understand what they mean. Some people speak the Christian lingo, without really understanding what it all means.

At the very least, review the way of salvation. If your doubt persists, it would be good to suggest studying the way of salvation. Explain that it would not be in his best interest to be baptized until he is certain of eternal life.

Clarify the meaning of baptism

Once you are clear the person is a genuine believer, you need to make sure he really understands baptism. It might be good to review the following passages with him:

- Command for baptism: Matt 28:18-20
- Examples: Acts 2:41, 8:12, 8:36-39, 10:47-48, 16:14-15, 30-33, 18:18
- Mode - immersion: Acts 8:36-39
- Meaning: Water baptism is a symbolic demonstration of Spirit baptism, where we identify with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection to life. (Romans 6:3-6, Colossians 2:12).
- Not necessary for salvation: Acts 10:44, 47-48 (cf. Heb 9:14, 22, 1 John 1:7, Rev 1:5, Rom 8:9)

Explain how it will be done

Tell the individual what to expect and how to plan for the baptism. This can be done either during the interview or on the day of the baptism. Occasionally, a person may have a fear of water. In this case, encourage him to find strength in the Lord to face this fear.

As I go "through the motions" or a dry run, I will position the two of us standing as though in the water. With one of my hands behind his back, I hold out the other hand in front for him to grab hold of. Then I have him bend his knees and allow himself to lean backward or drop down while holding my front hand. I bend down with him and then help him back up. A dry run like this can help him or her know what to expect.

You may want to have the individual prepare a testimony to give at the baptism. But, reviewing it with them ahead of the baptism would be wise. Make it clear, though, that this is optional.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.
Acts 2:2:41

Remind the candidate to bring clothes suitable for wearing into the water and a dry set of clothes to wear after baptism. For women candidates, you may wish to provide a modesty gown as well as a trusted female to assist before and after the baptism.

Encourage all candidates to invite relatives and friends.

The ceremony itself

The actual ceremony can vary widely. A good pattern to follow would be to start with a hymn emphasizing commitment and discipleship, followed by a short message explaining baptism. There will most likely be non-Christians in attendance, so make sure to present the gospel clearly.

You should enter the water first and invite the candidates one-by-one into the water. Those candidates giving a testimony can do so either just before entering the water or while standing with you in the water.

I will then publicly ask the individual something like: "Have you come to believe you are a sinner and have trusted in Christ, that he died for you and rose again for the forgiveness of your sins?"

Following an affirmative answer, I will then say something like, "Upon the author-

ity of God's Word, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit." At this point, the person will be immersed with my assistance.

What if he doesn't go all the way under? This does happen occasionally—that's what your back hand is for. Holding on to the shirt high on the back allows you to gently pull him down the rest of the way.

Following the baptism of all candidates, a closing hymn and prayer are appropriate. A fellowship time afterwards provides opportunity for celebrating and mingling with non-Christian guests.

Age issues

How old must a child be before he can be baptized? Clearly, Scripture does not teach infant baptism, nor does it give any examples of infants being baptized. Additionally, Scripture gives no specific guidelines about age requirements. We must draw on inferences from the Word.

Baptism is an expression of a person's own faith and obedience to Christ. Consequently, there should be enough maturity to comprehend and believe the gospel, as well as to embrace the significance of baptism. The Philippian jailer's whole family was baptized, but note also that the whole family believed!

At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family. Acts 16:33-34

Every member of the family was capable of believing, and thus were of sufficient age and maturity for this to be meaningful.

My observations suggest that children under the age of 8-10 years of age may not have sufficient appreciation for the meaning of baptism. This clearly is a judgment call on the part of the elders and may vary according to the maturity level.

*Here is a trustworthy saying:
If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.*

1 Timothy 3:1

Learning From the Good Shepherd

by Bob Lehman

Few, if any of us, today live the life of a shepherd. The industrial revolution long ago turned society away from the fields to the confines of a building. Now the information age glues our eyes to a computer monitor and ears to a cell phone. Consequently the analogy of shepherding God's people frequently loses its obvious significance. The Psalmist captures much of the shepherd's life to help us in chapter 23.

Notice, David summarizes the shepherding function of our Lord as caring for our needs; "I shall not want." That is not to be interpreted as the young child exclaimed, "I don't want a shepherd," but rather indicates sufficient provision for one's needs. To shepherd is to know what is lacking and to meet that need. Moses recorded:

If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor

shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him, and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. (Deut 15:7 NKJV)

Compassion and generosity characterize the shepherd. Consequently, shepherd-

The Lord is my Shepherd
I shall not want...

Psalm 23:1

ing does not involve simply offering spiritual platitudes but deals practically in the lives of those being shepherded. James suggests:

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for their body, what does it profit? (James 2:15-16)

For the most part, the shepherd is in the background simply watching, listening and discerning the circumstances that are unfolding. Becoming aware of needs implies a ready contact and involvement in their lives; not an intrusive dictatorial relationship but a caring supportive concern demonstrating sincerity and love.

Perhaps the picture of the shepherd sitting under the shade of a tree carefully monitoring his flock grazing before him captures the relationship involved. He is alert to any dangers that may threaten and he is aware when sheep have strayed from the flock. He deals with those belligerent sheep disrupting the peace of the flock. He observes, he cares, he provides.

If a shepherd of sheep is so careful to watch over his flock like this, how much more should elders of the church watch over and "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you." (1 Peter 5:2a) following the example of our Good Shepherd. 

Wives' Corner

A Woman of The Summer

by Mary Gianotti

Summer—I love it! After months of poor weather and being indoors I enjoy the freedom of walking outside in my bare feet or digging my hands into the flower beds. Having my personal time with God on the deck in the cool of the morning brings a fresh appreciation of my Creator.

In regard to being an elder's wife during the summer, my attitude has changed over the last few years. In the past, I longed for summer to arrive. It meant that Awana was done, Ladies Study was over and I could have a break from teaching Sunday school.

In short, I was tired. Tired of people and their problems. I looked forward to a few months when I didn't need to be with the dear Christians quite as much. Often after the summer break, discovered my attitude towards people was not much better. I'd like to share with you two perspectives that have helped me use my summer more effectively.

You need a rest

First of all, we all do get tired and need a break. Jesus at times was aware that his disciples needed to get away from the people and be alone with him (Mark 4: 34). Even Jesus spent time by himself with his Father away from his demanding ministry (Matthew 6:46).

We need to follow our Lord's example

and have a rest away from ministry. For my husband and me, being at home is *not* being away from ministry, the phone and e-mail that demand responses. When our children were young, we purchased a small tent. It was our only affordable means of getting away. Since then, we have collected photo albums of memories, times of rest and relaxation.

I have discovered that a mere vacation is not enough to revive the body, soul and mind. Our best breaks are when we combine physical relaxation and spiritual rest. "Rest in the shadow of the Almighty." Psalm 91:1. Ask your husband to watch the kids for a while and have a personal retreat with the Lord. Be purposeful as you pack your suitcase. Plan how you will spend time with the Lord. Bring articles or a Christian book that will strengthen your walk with the Lord.

You can still have a ministry

As I watched my bird feeder last night, I was reminded of another lesson about my attitude towards ministry in the summer. We have a lovely family of cardinals that regularly visits our feeder. Dad and Mom Cardinal are proud and watchful parents over their new daughter. She is fat and fuzzy and well taken care of. But later last night, when most of the birds had nested down, a lone cardinal visited our feeder. It appeared sick with no feathers on the top of its head and

not as healthy looking as our "family" that regularly visits.

I was reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 9:12 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." These are the people Jesus came to minister to and the ones he has called us to help. The spiritually sick need our care in the summer as well as the rest of the year. Keep a watchful eye out for the sick birds in the flock who need care this summer. Take up Jesus' mission and be their doctor. A listening ear, feeling the pain and administering God's word were needed.

Summer provides a variety of enjoyable ways to minister to others. Try being creative. Break out of the usual routine. Invite another family on a picnic. Make it simple—hotdogs and paper plates will work. Meet a single mom at McDonalds, encourage her while the kids use the playground. Arrange to meet a church family at your favorite ice-cream shop. On a hot summer evening, pick up a worn out Mom and treat her to a frappachino at a café.

The possibilities are unique to summer and can be a refreshing change as we minister to other. My prayer as I write is this, "Lord continue to change my heart. Provide the rest I need physically and spiritually—and empower me to reach out to those who need you." 



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

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Feedback & comments are welcomed along with suggestions for future articles.

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The Second Work *(continued from page 1)*

bidden to His disciples by the Lord Jesus (see Matt. 23:10 where the word used is a form of the verb “hegeomai” referred to above).

But good leaders must at times be firm and take decisive action to ensure that righteousness is upheld. Anyone who thinks a good leader need only set a good example doesn’t know much about leading sheep. Many dangers along the way require shepherds who not only can function “up front,” but also those who, with rod and staff, can care for any who lag behind or tend to stray. Paul spoke twice of the authority God had given him for edification (II Cor. 10:8; 13:10)

Seeing the Big Picture

Throughout the book of Acts, one cannot help but notice that the strong and capable leaders the Lord was supplying for His church were dependent on God’s leading. For example, gifted men responsible for the assembly in Antioch received guidance concerning the next major step in the direction of the work while they

“ministered to the Lord and fasted” (Acts 13:1-3). It is no surprise then, that we find occasional notes throughout the book of Acts describing the remarkable expansion of the work and the spread of the gospel.

Elders today must be sure that all their time is not devoted to the small details of assembly life, and “firefighting” as some call it. Quality time must be reserved for seeking direction from the Head for the care of His sheep, the future expansion of the work, and even the pace at which to proceed. Opinions may vary as to the exact meaning of Prov. 29:18; “Where there is no vision the people perish,” but the thought expressed applies well to the Christian community: God initiates but who will perceive and lead the people in obedience?

Finally, leaders need prayer to keep from getting discouraged—they probably get more criticism than anyone else. How often are elders engaged in the work of God late at night while the majority of the flock is asleep in their beds! Pray for those who lead !



From The Q-Files

DISCERNING LEADERSHIP

“True discernment means not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, the permanent from the transient, the good and the better from the best...learning to think God’s thoughts after him practically and spiritually; it means having a sense of how things look in God’s eyes.” (Taken from an article entitled “Discernment: Thinking God’s Thoughts After Him” by Sinclair Ferguson. Eternity, September 1988. Page 57.)

WATCH WHAT YOU CHANGE!

There are times when things need to change for various reasons. Unthinking traditionalism can choke a local church as well as stifle the Spirit’s work in raising up younger leadership.

But, be careful! *“When ever you remove a fence, stop to ask yourself why it was put there in the first place?”* (G.K. Chesterton)

Recommended Reading

Basic Christian Training, by O.J. Gibson (Walterick Publishers, PO Box 2216, Kansas City, KS 66110-0216, 1-800-255-4097, 1-913-334-0100)

This excellent workbook lays a solid foundation for new believers and for those who may have missed some basics along the way. Chapter four on baptism is particularly well done.

This is part of a series (Basic, Intermediate and Advanced) and can be used in a group setting or one-on-one discipling. When finished, the believer will have not only a good grasp of the basics, but also a handy reference for future ministry.

This series is one of the best and most thorough course of it’s kind. We highly recommended it.

Bible Study Foundations
(<http://bible.org/>)

This is a great resource for study material and reference works. Check it out. You may not agree with everything there, but there is much that is valuable. (How did they ever get first claim on that domain name!!)