



Editor's Note

This issue of Elders' ShopNote marks the completion of two years of publication. This ministry began as a follow up to elder training sessions in various areas. The need became apparent for practical teaching in the "how to's" of being an elder. Many found themselves stepping into the position with little or no training--willing, but feeling the lack of equipping.

Also, many elders face a time crunch between family, work and church, with precious little time for personal development. ESN was envisioned to step in the gap by providing "bite-size" input in various aspects of being an elder. Each article is

short, not overwhelming, but readily usable.

In order to be effective, we need to have feedback from you. Let us know what you find helpful and what is not so helpful. Also, could you give us your suggestions for articles that would address the practical issues you face? Is the length of ESN right, or would you like to see it a page or two longer?

The Lord has supplied for these two years through the donations of many individuals and a few organizations. We praise Him for meeting all the needs. As is His practice, the supply just meets the need and no more. We praise Him for His faithfulness. 

Practical Ministry Spining Wheels in Elders' Meetings?

by Chuck Gianotti

Do your elders' meetings go long? Do you find yourself exhausted, but not finished with everything that needs discussing? After a while the mind goes numb, the eyes glass over, and you go into "auto-pilot"! And it seems like you get very little time to study of the word together and to pray, the two key activities of spiritual leaders in the church (Acts 6:4 NIV). Some look on these as nefarious gatherings, with time being stolen from other more important things, like pastoring the flock of God.

If your local fellowship follows the biblical pattern of elders working as a team, then times of deliberate, thoughtful interaction must take place.

How can we economize the discussion portion of these meetings, so that we are redeeming the time (Eph 6:16 NKJV)?

The scriptural admonition in 1 Cor

14:40 applies to such interactions: "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." Here are some ideas that may help you cut down on the length of your meetings and give you more time to spend with the flock of God.

- 1) Identify one of the elders with administrative gift and allow him to chair the meeting. This recognizes that some can keep a meeting on track better than others.
- 2) Plan the agenda carefully. Prioritize so that the more important matters get discussed first.
- 3) Only include agenda items that are submitted ahead of time. Any considerations and facts that affect the discussion of each item should be submitted along with the item. In other words, do your research ahead of time.

4) Circulate the agenda to the all elders a few days before the meeting, so that each has time to reflect on the issues. They are much better prepared to discuss intelligently rather than "shooting from the hip" during the meeting.

5) Some decisions can be made "offline". For example, if all the elders have e-mail, why not send some proposed decisions via the internet with

three options for feedback: "Yes", "No" or "We need to discuss this further." If everyone gives the same answer, the decision is done.

6) Keep good minutes and write them up as soon as possible. You don't need to record all the details, but accurate records of decisions made are important. The sooner the secretary writes up the minutes afterward, the better his memory will be for filling in any blanks in his notes. The minutes should be circulated as soon as possible so that the other elders can review them, correct them (if need be) and be reminded of their personal responsibilities arising from the meeting.

7) Make decisions and stick by them. Don't rehash. Much time can be wasted when issues are brought up over and over again. Sometimes, you need to simply move on.

8) Early on the agenda, should be "follow-up" item, to keep each elder

accountable. During this time, a brief review is made to see if decisions from the last meeting were implemented.

9) Big ideas that need longer discussion, should be scheduled for extended discussion at a separate (special) meeting.

10) Trust one another to handle many of the routine things. It doesn't take four elders to decide the color of the bulletin.

11) Leave deacon work to deacons.

12) Set an agreed time limit to your meetings and strictly enforce it.

13) Avoid straying from the agenda. We have found it helpful to have as the last item on the

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*But, everything should be done
in a fitting and orderly way.
1 Corinthians 14:40*

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Biblical Foundations

Prayer and Ministry of the Word

by Jack Spender

In Acts 6:3 there is a single verse description of the priorities embraced by the early church apostles. “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Truly a noble standard, but what exactly is meant? Comparing scripture with scripture provides some clues.

In Hebrews 13:7,17 & 24 there are three references to those who rule (more literally “those who lead”) among God’s people. Since the plural form is used, most understand the text as referring to church elders. Perhaps the word itself is not used to avoid confusing the Hebrew readers as to whether church elders or elders in Israel are meant.

In any case, the reference is clearly to those in authority, and may remind us about the work of elders today. Four activities are mentioned which, taken together, shed light on the passage in Acts 6. These leaders have spoken the word of God, and have provided an example of faith to follow. They watch for souls and then give account to God. On this latter phrase, AW Pink writes: “They often render an account to Him now, keeping up a constant intercourse with Him, spreading before Him the state and needs of His people, seeking supplies of grace. A full and final account must be rendered of their stewardship in the Day to come.” [Pink; Hebrews III p. 342] In order

to make their work a joyful one, believers are instructed to remember, obey, and submit. Consider the practical outworking of these several functions.

First, elders must tell the people what God has said. To do so, they must spend time studying the Scriptures, pondering and discerning both the meaning and the intended application. Elders need to be good bridge builders; that is, they need to help people move in their thinking from AD 60 or 70 to the present. In this way, the Christian learns how God speaks through His word. Although an elder may not be a public speaker, he must learn ways by which he can bring God’s truth to others.

Second, and a natural corollary to communication, is conduct. An elder’s life must authenticate his message. Above all other virtues, his life must display his faith in God. I remember spending time with brother Vernon Schlieff of Louisiana and noting the solid connection between his way of living and his oft heard exclamation: “I believe God!” Moreover, the qualification of elders in I Tim. 3:2 “given to hospitality....” is relevant here, because elders cannot be “Sunday only” leaders. Sooner or later trials will come and faithful elders will want to be transparent in their response. People should be able to talk to an elder’s wife and children without any suggestion that home and private life are off

limits.

Third, elders watch over the sheep in the flock where God has placed them. The use of “souls” is interesting, for while there are certainly dangers to the spirit and the body, it is the soul that requires constant vigilance. The mind must be transformed, the will brought under God’s authority, and the emotions kept in their rightful place of responding rather than ruling. Doing this great work is beyond the abilities of any single man, and makes us appreciate God’s wisdom in providing a plurality of leaders in the church.

Finally, elders must give account to God. They are under authority as well as in authority. Nothing can make the work of overseer more painful than to report on the state of the flock with a heavy heart, literally groaning to the Lord. Happy the elder who intercedes for saints who, amid many problems and trials, are nevertheless growing in grace and in the faith.

In conclusion, these insights from Hebrews 13 help us understand the passage in Acts 6. Elders continually go before God in the study of His word, and then go among the believers to proclaim truth and care for the sheep. Then they return to commune with the Lord about the state of His flock. Believers who are aware of this process will be diligent to help their leaders do this work with joy. 

Leadership Principles

The Church and Para-church

by Arnot McIntee

February the twenty-seventh, 1944 seems a long time ago—and it is. On that night I trusted Christ as my Savior and there followed opportunities to serve the Lord which increased with the passing of time. Early in my Christian life I learned to appreciate God’s precious plan and purpose for the Church in its universal and local aspects.

Accepting the fact that the Church is the most precious thing in the universe to its Risen-Head, I felt it should have my highest priority in worship and service. That is the way it was as recorded in Acts 2:42. “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.”

It is interesting that when an individual begins to manifest a God-given gift, groups outside the local church (sometimes these are called “para-church” groups) learn of him and soon invite him or her to join them

in the furtherance of their cause. This can be especially true for elders who are diligent in working hard for the Lord. When this happens the individual must seek God’s guidance and address several key issues before he accepts the invitation to join the para-church organization.

The Family

Will his or her spouse be supportive of the time taken from the family to serve this group? Will it be understood that one is serving the Lord when absent from the family fulfilling his or her new responsibilities? Such involvement will require the prayerful guidance and support of both husband and wife from the outset.

The Assembly

Activity in the assembly can also be very time consuming. It would be appropriate, then, to discuss the possibility of one’s new involvement with the elders

and to learn if they support it. They may be in a better position to know if the objectives of the inviting group are supportive of the assembly’s. Have any of the elders had experience with this group?

When an elder, himself, engages in para-church activities, this can have a significant impact on his involvement in the assembly. Are there any ways in which your involvement with the group will help or harm the local fellowship? Do the other elders feel you possess the spiritual and other qualifications to serve the assembly and the group in this way? Some have successfully balanced valuable service to both church and para-church organizations.

We are obviously living in a day of which scripture warns that men’s hearts will grow cold. That is sad, but true. This is a day in which warm-hearted saints are needed and can find much to do within the

(cont. page 4)

Leadership Principles

You Want to go WHERE?

by Jim Fleming

A bright young couple approach the elders. "We've been considering the huge task of reaching Islamic people in Turkey," Mark and Sue discuss with them, "and we are open to giving our lives to that work. What do you men counsel and what should our next steps be?"

There is some scuffling of shoes, clearing of throats and a few vague suggestions given about seeking the will of God, waiting on Him, or getting more involved in the local church and seeing what transpires.

A few months later Mark and Sue attend Urbana, a huge youth conference on missions, and discover literally dozens of mission organizations clamoring for prospective missionaries. Their representatives are ready with more answers than Mark and Sue have questions and they come away with dazzling four color brochures explaining the logistics of how to get from Smalltown, USA/Canada to being real missionaries among the Uzbecks in Central Asia.

The result: many of our best missionary

candidates are going out under denominational mission boards. Yes, they are doing a good work for the Lord, but is their purpose to plant and build up churches with principles you and I so deeply believe in?

My wife, Sharon, and I have been commended ("commissioned") to mission work since 1984, first in Lima, Peru and for the past eight years in Bogota, Colombia. We have close friends in many other "missions" and we could write a long article on the advantages of the assembly mission movement. Acts 13 through 21 give the simple method Paul used. New Testament brethren missions continues to have an immense impact in the world by the hundreds of workers following the N.T. pattern. But, many young people are opting for other ways.

Elders, you can change the trend! Catch God's vision for this world (Matthew 28:18-20). Gain a large world view and know what the needs are (Luke 10:2). Be willing to send out your best young people (Acts 13:2). Spend time in prayer and

preparation with key young candidates (Acts 13:1, 3). The Holy Spirit may use you to challenge them to go--don't wait for them to beg you to let them go! Consider foreign missions as an extension of your local church ministries (Acts 13:4). Trust God to multiply your financial base so you can invest in the harvest and not just cover comfort costs at home (Acts 14:26, Phil 4:10-20). Get excited to hear the results they will report (Acts 14:27, Lk 10:17-20)!

Motivated to get involved? What else will help? Here are some ideas:

- 1) Start communicating with missionaries you have sent out.
- 2) Adopt a missionary family if you don't have one commended already.
- 3) Do a missionary minute once a month in the preaching service, maybe speaking live by phone.
- 4) Get prayer requests by e-mail twice weekly.
- 5) Organize informative, fun times with them when they are on furlough.
- 6) Subscribe to Missions Magazine (published by CMML*). (cont. page 4)

Wives' Corner

Faith or Fear ?

by Mary Gianotti

It seems like life throws things at us and if you are like me you may not feel you do that great a job at managing the catch. Life circumstances vary from adjustments in marriage, toilet training, sending your youngest off to school to cancer in the family, a wayward teen, an aging parent, or an unworkable job situation.

For me it is knowing that today is my son's birthday. He is in Korea and I'm in the USA. My daughter is fourteen hours away at college and I miss them both. I thought I had the "empty nest" problem all wrapped up and put on the shelf two years ago.

Why do we have these circumstances in life that press in on us? They give us heavy hearts. We find ourselves in tears, upset, and impatient, often with our husband, kids or someone in our fellowship.

This morning I read about a woman who had everything go wrong. Her husband betrayed her and left her without support or protection. Her name is Sarai, Abram's wife. To protect himself, Abram allowed Pharaoh to take her into his house under the pretence that she was his sister, rather than his wife. Genesis 12:17 tells the story, making it clear that even though her husband abandoned her, God came miraculously to her rescue:

"But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai."

He knew Sarai's problem and He knows yours. God has not changed. David writes years later "...you are familiar with all my ways" Ps. 139:3

God was there for her.

In our difficult circumstances we need to take steps of Faith. The first step of Faith is to believe God *knows* your problem. The second step of Faith is to believe God *cares* about your problem. Nahum, whose name means "compassion," writes these words: "The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him." (Nahum 1:7) If you feel God is distant, this is not because He has moved away. Take the Faith step toward Him and acknowledge that He cares for you and your present troubles.

The third step of Faith is believing that God *helps*. He is your lifeline in times of distress. Sarai discovered that God was working on her behalf. He became

everything to her in her time of need.

She was alone, God was there for her.

She was betrayed, God was loyal to her.

She was used, God became her protector and provider.

Peter gives us further commentary on Sarai's situation: "holy women of the past put their trust in God." (1 Peter 3:5-6) That is our example to follow, so Peter goes on to admonish us women that "...like Sarai...you are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."

We have a choice: live by Faith or live in Fear. To live in fear is to give into what for the moment feels natural and easy, like for example, when I let my circumstances pull me down into the pit of self pity, fearing the future and dreading the present. In Sarai's darkest moment she chose to reject fear and live by faith. We join with her in living by faith (2 Cor 5:7) when we acknowledge that God knows, that God cares and that God will help.

Even though my empty nest is not neatly tied up and put away, I desire to stand in that long line of holy women from the past who put their trust in God. How about you?

ESN

Practical Min. (cont.)

agenda, a five minute “elders on the loose” time, when each elder is free to raise an issue not on the agenda that he would like the group to talk about at some future date.

These are just a few ways to help keep elders’ meetings flowing smoothly and efficiently. The end result will be more time available for study of the word, prayer and shepherding the flock in more personal ways. (ESN)

Para-church (cont.)

local church. Godly, caring leadership is urgently required in many fellowships to serve the Lord and His people. It is here our first responsibility lies.

If, after prayerfully addressing the above and other issues, the individual sincerely believes before God, his family and the elders that he should take on responsibilities in this new work, let him do so under God’s direction. As I pray for him in the work God has called him to, may he pray for me should the Lord direct me to devote my full energies to His work within the assembly. (ESN)

From The Q-Files

As a train was about to leave a large railroad station, the conductor began to take tickets. Looking at the ticket of the first passenger he remarked, “Friend, I think you’re on the wrong train!” “But,” replied the man, “the ticket agent told me this was my train.” After a little discussion, the conductor decided to check with the ticket agent. Before long, it became clear that the conductor was on the wrong train!

Go Where? (cont.)

- 7) Have a missions weekend or missions breakfast.
- 8) Attend local missionary meetings.
- 9) Vacation by visiting a missionary. Expensive—yes, but revolutionizing.
- 10) Send young people with mission interest to study the Inter-Cultural program at Emmaus Bible College.
- 11) Send candidates to CMML’s and MSC Canada’s Missionary Orientation Program (MOP*).
- 12) Get familiar with CMML and MSC Canada. Representatives will come free of charge to your church and do seminars on what they are and how they can provide service for you and your missionaries
- 13) Be flexible with preaching schedules so that missionaries can be included.

*For more information, contact Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML), P.O. Box 13, Spring Lake, New Jersey, 07762-0013 U.S.A. (731) 449-8880. Or MSC Canada, 509 – 3950 14th Avenue, Markham, Ontario L3R OA9 Canada, (905) 947-0468. (ESN)

When the leader is lost, how can the followers be going on the right track? *Annon.*

When it is not necessary to make a decision, it is necessary not to make a decision. *Lucius, Second Lord Falkland*

When a general gets too far ahead of his troops, he’s often mistaken for the enemy. *Anon.* (ESN)

Resistant to Change?

Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana, but as soon as he touches the stairs, all of the apes are sprayed with cold water. After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result—all the apes are sprayed with cold water. Turn off the cold water. If, later, another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them.

Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes which have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs. Why not?

“Because that’s the way it’s always been around here.” *Source unknown* (ESN)

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“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.