



Update

Editor's Note

We praise the Lord for the overwhelming response to Elders' ShopNotes (ESN). We currently have subscribers in Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Japan, Peru, the United States and Uruguay. Many have told us they are making extra copies. ESN is being published in English and Spanish, and a request has been made to translate it into the major languages of India.

We have added a new option for a more timely and cost effective way to deliver ShopNotes. If you have a computer you can now receive ShopNotes by e-mail as an attachment. It can be read or printed using a free program called Adobe Acrobat Reader and it will retain the same easy to read format. You can even print it in color! With a good printer you can make as many copies as you like.

If this would be a convenient way for you

to receive ESN, then go to our web-site at <http://home.rochester.rr.com/esn>. There you can learn more about this option, modify your subscription and get a free copy of the reader program.

Of course, if you don't have a computer or you prefer to continue receiving the regular mailed version, no problem—your subscription will remain the same. Our goal is to serve you, both elders and potential elders, and help you become more fully equipped to do the work of shepherding the flock of God.

One last item, thanks to all who have financially supported this ministry. Your gifts have encouraged us to continue with publication.

The Lord bless each of you—He knows your labor of love and the great sacrifice you are making for His glory! As one brother says, "Keep your knees bent and you head up—we're on the winning side!"



Biblical Foundations

The Third Work: Overseeing

by Jack Spender

The third work of elders is to act as overseers. This ministry is so important that the term "overseer" is actually a synonym for "elder" in the NT (compare Acts 20:17, 28). The Greek word "episkopos" comes from the preposition "epi" (over) and "skopeo" (look, watch) giving the sense of one who watches over others. It carries with it an authority to maintain order & harmony in the congregation.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) uses the word for government or temple officials (2 Ki 11:15; compare 2 Chron. 34:17).

The Lord Jesus is referred to as "The Shepherd and Bishop (or, Overseer or episkopos) of our souls" (1 Pet 2:25 KJV). His very life was marked by looking after the good of His own, and watching against evil. On one occasion, we see him casting money changers out of the temple. This is after he had gone to the temple and "looked around" the day before (Mk 11:11,15).

No word better describes the work of church elders. As the first two works we considered (feeding and leading) were given for the "nurture" of God's people collectively, the third and fourth supply the "admonition" side, to provide a safeguard against internal strife (overseeing) and serious attack (protecting).

The Work of Oversight: a Good Work

Three words apply to effectively overseeing others. An elder must have wisdom to deal with people. He must know the teaching of Scripture about godly conduct and relationships, and have some experience in maintaining

order and harmony in the church.

Though he must not act like a dictator (or "lord it over God's heritage" 1 Pet. 5:3), he must have God given authority to deal with problems that arise. In writing to the young church at Thessalonica, Paul exhorts the congregation to know those who labor among them and are over them in the Lord.

On the other hand, turning to those who are leading (possibly not yet formally recognized as elders), he writes (paraphrased): "See to it that

no one renders evil for evil..." making it clear that an authority to act on the part of the leaders is taken for granted.

While this authority comes from God, it must be recognized by the people in the church—that

recognition provides the credibility to stand for what is right when trials come.

Some may question why this function would be necessary in a group that emphasizes the equal priesthood of all believers. But just as God has set different roles within a family, so also in the church. As with any family, problems can arise and good food must be balanced with proper care and discipline. Nurture and admoni-

(Continued on page 4)

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers ...
Acts 20:28 (NKJV)

WHAT'S INSIDE

Biblical Foundations: The Third Work	p. 1
Leadership Principles: Why People Resist Change	p. 2
Practical Ministry: God's Purposes In Suffering	p. 3
Wives' Corner: A Helper to My "Elder" Husband	p. 3
From The Q-Files	p. 4

Leadership Principles

Why People Resist Change

by Chuck Gianotti

“**W**e never did it that way before!” You have sought the Lord’s guidance and are now leading His people in a new direction of ministry. But, you can count on the fact that there will be resistance to change.

Certainly, change can be misguided—for example, trying out the latest fad to sweep the Christian world. And change is plainly wrong if it involves compromising Biblical principles or doctrine.

But, change in ministry methods can also be inspired by the Lord, so long as the message is not compromised. The visionary elder longs to adopt Paul’s creative attitude in 1 Cor 9:22 *“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”*

Every leader sooner or later discovers resistance to new ideas and methods. It doesn’t take long for even a new church to fall prey to the propensity of people to resist change. A once innovative outreach can, after a few years, become the “way we do it at our church”—and to change becomes a major battle. Tempers flare, stubbornness surfaces and unity is endangered!

Where once a canoe was the only way to reach a remote group, now airplanes make short work of the travel experience. Pity the Christian who believes in the superiority of the paddle and superficially denounces the “new ways.”

Most leaders are familiar with the common complaints against change:

- That is not “God’s prescribed method!”
- God’s word and His ways never change.
- It worked before, it will work now—if we work harder.
- The reason we don’t see results any more is that the church today is worldly.
- A change could cause division and God desires unity.

Each of these offer truth, but whether they address the real issues depends on the change in question. It is more helpful to discern the underlying *causes* for resistance. Here are a few:

God might be using resistance to teach me something.

Peter’s two-faced ministry was resisted by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). Balaam was defied by a donkey (Num 22). Put simply, we may be wrong in seeking a particular change! God can use godly or stubborn instruments to confront us with our own shortcomings. Humble self-analysis is the first step in responding to resistance. Some of the greatest lessons in leadership are learned this way!

Godly men sometimes disagree strongly on methods.

Paul’s method of ministry required men who were not “quitters.” Barnabas’ method made room for a recovering “failure.” The two locked horns and parted ways—with no record of God’s judgment on either (Acts 14:36-41). Sometimes two separate ministries are better than one marked by continuous conflict.

Those resisting change may feel threatened.

To some, change may imply that what was done before was wrong or their leadership is ineffective. People become personally connected with their ministries; it’s difficult to let go of something into which they have poured a great amount of themselves. You must humbly show respect to them. *“All of you, clothe yourself with humility toward one another . . .”* 1 Peter 5:5b. You need to affirm that the older way has had great value and has been blessed by the

*I have become all things to all men
so that by all possible means
I might save some.*
1 Corinthians 9:22

Lord. And, you need to help them understand that methods come and go, each having its purpose for a time and a place. What once was effective may become ineffective when circumstances change.

We need commitment *not* to our methods, but to our mission—to reach people for Christ and help them grow in their obedience to the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20). Effective leadership wisely chooses the best method at the right time. Even the requirements for the deacon “prototypes” in Acts 6 include being *“full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom”* (emphasis added). Their job was to organize the ministry to overlooked widows—something that had never been done before!

A method has taken the status of “thus saith the Lord.”

Certainly, some methods are mandated by God, such as plurality of leadership. But, some too easily assign the status of “biblical methods” to “traditions.” Traditions may be good and wise applications of scripture in their time and context. However, we must help people avoid elevating what was “a good way of doing things” to the level of universal Biblical principles. Careful teaching about the flexibility and variety of the NT Church is essential. The

corresponding opposite comment is, “I don’t see that method in the Bible.” Cars are not in the Bible either, yet we make good use of them in our ministries. Careful study and courageous application of scripture is required to overcome this form of resistance.

The sin of pride or stubbornness may be at the heart of resistance.

This is especially difficult when pride or stubbornness occurs in one of the “movers” of the church. This is the person who, though not spiritually mature, seems to always control the direction of things. They may be subtle and passive, using quiet, timely comments to deflate enthusiasm. Or they may be openly belligerent. Paul had his Judaizers; John had his Diotrophes. You will have your detractors.

These men must be humbly, yet firmly dealt with. Sometimes, even open rebuke is required (3 John 1:9). Change in ministry that comes from the Lord requires courageous men of God, willing to challenge ungodly opposition.

The wise elder, when confronted with resistance to change, will pray for discernment and seek the underlying causes. He will then be better able to respond in a godly way, so that the work of the Lord will progress with God’s blessing.

What if I am the one resisting change?

Maybe you have been reading this article and find you are the one resistant to change. It may be the Lord has given you the insight and courage to resist ungodly, wrongly motivated change. Or it may be one of the reasons given above.

The humble, godly elder will first examine his own soul, so that he might hear God’s voice. As David said in Psalm 139:23-24 *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

Only then can an elder wisely respond to those seeking change in ministry methods and programs.

ESN

Errata

In the article “The Second Work” in last month’s issue (Volume 1, Number 5), the reference to 1 Timothy 2:25, should have read 2 Timothy 2:24-25. We apologize for this oversight.

ESN

God's Purposes in Suffering

by Peter Kerr

In Romans 8:28-29, God lets us in on His ultimate purpose in all He allows and brings into our path. His goal is to make us more like our Savior, Jesus Christ! To do that He has a lot of 'undoing' to accomplish in us, as well as building and molding.

This work of God is a little like the process of clearing, burning, plowing, fertilizing, tilling, planting, watering and weeding that is needed to produce a useful crop for the harvest. It takes time and effort, but the outcome is worth it.

Part of God's method of accomplishing His purpose is through suffering. Does He allow us to suffer? Yes. But, why?

- To humble us and get our attention when we are preoccupied with lesser things. 2 Cor 12:7-10, Phil 3:7-11.
- To discipline us for disobedience which is destructive (i.e. purge away some of our rebellion). Heb 12:11.

- To teach us obedience. Heb 12:5-11.
- To build and refine faith, proving its genuineness (real faith always grows under pressure). 1 Pet 1:6-7.
- To mold character and develop the fruit of

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. Romans 8:28-29


the Spirit in us (specifically, to increase patience!) Rom 5:3-4, James 1:2-4.

- To share in the privilege of suffering for the sake of Christ! 1 Pet 2:21, 4:12-14, Phil 1:29.
- To bring us into experiencing God's precious comfort, so we can be 'tender' in

ministering to others passing through the fire of suffering. 2 Cor 1:3-6.

Seeing it from this perspective (and bearing in mind Rom 8:28-29) can relieve us of *struggling* against suffering (in whatever form it comes). It frees us to embrace even the pain of our suffering, focusing on His perfect eternal plan of conforming us to the image of the Lord Jesus, who willingly suffered so much for us (Heb 12:1-3, 1 Pet 4:12-14).

This perspective will also equip us to be able to share with others who are suffering, and "comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Cor 1:4).

An elder who has experienced God in the depths of suffering is significantly equipped to come along side of suffering "sheep." The truth of scriptures that deal with affliction have become a living reality in his life. His counsel, rather than 

Wives' Corner

A Helper to My "Elder Husband"

There is a verse in scripture I can't ignore. It has my name on it. It has your name on it also, if you are the wife of an elder or deacon. We should all memorize it. 1 Tim 3:11 *"In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything."*

God's word is helpful and in this case directive. In the past issues of ESN we have discussed each of these characteristics that God has called us to develop in our lives. In the next few issues we will look at other areas of becoming the women/elders-wives God desires.


A few weeks ago my daughter traveled to Niagara Falls with seventeen of her college-aged friends who were counselors at a camp outside of Detroit. They all camped out in my parents backyard and family room floor. We provided meals and some direction regarding fun activities. When all seventeen invaded the local pool Saturday night, they soon became the main attraction on the diving board. The contest was to see who could make the biggest splash. The more energy, speed and bounce, the bigger the waves. It was entertaining to say the least.

I want my life to make a splash—the waves touching and effecting the lives around me. As an elder's wife, I'm in a unique position to see this happen. The first

ripple reminds me of the person that I'm closest to—my husband. We are to be "one flesh" Genesis 2:24. Physically, emotionally and spiritually united—on the same page, working life out together. God designed me to be a helper for my husband. Derek Kidner, in his commentary on the book of Genesis, writes that the sexes are "complementary": the true partnership is expounded by the terms that are used: she will be "a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18, 20 RSV; literally a help as opposite him, i.e. corresponding to him).

We are to "help" our husbands in the work God has given them to do. While we wives of elders are not to be "assistant elders", in what way can we be a help to our husbands?

The Apostles Paul gives Timothy a list of qualifications and guidelines for men desiring this great work of shepherding God's people (1 Tim 3:1-7). It is quite a list! Being an elder is a high calling requiring integrity in every area of life. As his helper, I can assist my husband, making it easier for him to attain and maintain these characteristics or I can hinder or prevent what God desires to do in his life. If I am lacking in one of more of the characteristics outlined for elders, I can't help him develop in those particular areas.

Let us be challenged by 1 Tim 3 and continue developing godly character. 


Recommended Reading

Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17, by Marcus Rainsford, (Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids, Michigan)

Written over 100 years ago, this lengthy, yet captivating study of the upper room discourse is a classic. Your heart will thrill as our Lord's prayer is laid out and examined phrase by phrase, and sometimes even word by word.

Nearly 500 pages in length, there is no fluff here. Each chapter is filled with devotional insight by a man who clearly knew the author of that prayer. I highly recommend this book, but don't plan to read it in one setting. You will need time to digest each part of it.

The Minister's Library, by Cyril J. Barber (Loizeaux Brothers: Neptune, NJ)

Barber has provided a great service in this two volume set of annotated listings of important Christian study and reference books published up through 1985. Organized by general topics and indexed by title and author, this is a must have for the student of the Word. Commentaries, topical studies, training materials, devotionals, church history, general reference works—all are annotated with a brief description of the strengths and weakness of each and an indication of which are the "best" works available. Very thorough. 



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

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(except as noted)*

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Elders’ SHOPNOTES is published bi-monthly as the Lord provides.

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Gifts in support of this ministry will ensure its continued publication and can be mailed to the above address, payable to: C.R. Gianotti.

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

The Third Work *(continued from page 1)*

tion compliment each other. Both must be done with love, and love cannot be present where either is lacking.

The Hard Part of Elder Work

Having the responsibility of an overseer is not an easy job if taken seriously. Paul reminds Timothy that an elder who rules well should be “counted worthy of double honor” (1 Tim 5:17). Many Scriptures require holiness and order in the house of God (Ps 93:5; 1 Cor 14:40; 1 Tim 3:15).

Nothing can spoil a good work faster than neglected evil. In fact, doing the hard thing is usually the key to blessing, while overlooking wrongs brings a solemn warning: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl 8:11). “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” (1 Cor 5:6) means simply: sin spreads! An elder must not look the other way while evil destroys the work.

Accordingly, we find the early elders (or apostles) confronting the first public sin in the church (Acts 5), dealing with

grumbling (Acts 6), arranging a ministry of care (Acts 11), responding to a doctrinal threat (Acts 15), called on to pray for the sick (James 5:14) and charged to address relationship problems (Phil. 4). In general, they were watching for the souls of the believers under their charge (Hebrews 13:17).

Benefits

Most people expect children to complain about the disciplines of school. But we know that as they mature children will realize how “rulers” and rules are the structures that make education possible. As with children, so with sheep. The loving presence of those who can “take care of the church of God” (1 Tim. 3:4) brings security to the young, prevents bitterness from taking root and keeps false doctrine from being spread. Godly overseers help the local church become a worthy model for the Christian family, as well as a suitable environment in which Christians can grow and become equipped for service.

Truly, “...if any man desires the work of an overseer, he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).



From The Q-Files

The “Modeling” Elder

The follow poem by an unknown author speaks of the power of a father’s modeling life for his son. But, the sentiments contained herein also hold true for the elders and the flock that they lead. A most powerful form of teaching is modeling, showing by our lives how others ought to live:

A careful man I ought to be;
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray,
For fear he’ll go the selfsame way.
Not once can I escape his eyes;
Whate’er he sees me do he tries.
Like me he says he’s going to be,
That little chap who follows me.
I must remember as I go
Through summer sun and winter snow,
I’m molding for the years to be--
That little chap who follows me.

As an elder, others may be looking to you for their pattern of the Christian walk. Can you say with the Apostle Paul, “*Whatever you have learned or received or heard form me, or seen in me—put it into practice.*” Phil 4:9

Overcoming Opposition

William Carey had to overcome great odds to obey the call of God. In The Challenge of Life, Oswald J. Smith noted that “even the Directors of the East India Company opposed [Carey’s] work. Following is the idiotic resolution they presented to Parliament: ‘The sending out of missionaries into one Eastern possession is the maddest, most extravagant, most costly, most indefensible project which has ever been suggested by a moonstruck fanatic.’”

Smith added, “In 1796, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed the following infamous resolution: ‘To spread the knowledge of the gospel amongst barbarians and heathens seems to be highly preposterous.’”

“One speaker in the House of Commons said that he would rather see a band of devils let loose in India than a band of missionaries. Such was the opposition to missions when Carey set forth. And yet, he was able to write, “Why is my soul disquieted within me? Things may turn out better than I expect. Everything is known to God, and God cares.””

William Carey stood the test, and became the father of modern missions. 