



Editor's Note

The internet is a marvelous tool for bible study research and Christian ministry reference. New sites are being added daily with mind-boggling frequency. How can you weed through to find ones that are really useful?

From time to time, we will pass on to you web addresses of some of the better sites we have come across. If any of you readers know of sites that may be helpful to others, please e-mail us (see address on back page) so we can review them and pass them on to our readers.

The older I get the more I accept the fact that not everyone will agree on all matters of faith and practice, even believers within the same churches, camps and Christian organizations. Of course, the more the agreement and same convictions, the less tension there will be and the easier it is to "love one another."

As elders we need to hold our conviction strongly, but also we need to be willing to appreciate resources from those who may not line up with our view points in every area. I would be careful about saying this to a newer believer,

but presumably an elder (remember that is the target group for this ministry) is mature in faith and able to discern well.

It is with that caveat we recommend for your considered reference a few web sites.:

www.bible-equip.com. This site is associated with the same people who bring you ESN, contains essays, articles and short pamphlets on a variety of practical and doctrinal issues.

www.bible.org (How did they corner that web address??) One of the most useful ones I have encountered, it contains a huge collection of doctrinal and topical essays, ministry helps, even an online bible (The Net Bible) which you can download for free. In practical areas it is very helpful—for example, you can download 15 samples of wedding vows (www.bible.org/docs/pastor/weddings/wedtoc.htm).

www.emmaus.edu. Home page for Emmaus Bible College.

www.klbc.ca. Home page for Kawartha Lakes Bible College, Ontario, Canada.



Leadership Principles

Visionary Leadership—2

by Chuck Gianotti

God uses men of vision to lead his people. Last issue we saw that visionary leadership requires humility and passion. This article concludes with four additional attributes.

Godly Vision Requires Perseverance

"... I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews ... I know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." (Acts 20:19, 23 NIV). This requires "staying power", the ability to keep on going in the face of roadblocks.

Vision doesn't come easy, for it is rooted in that which is eternal, not temporary.

There is a false notion that when you discover a vision from God, things will just fall into place. Yet, Jesus implied that the gates of Hell will make valiant attempts at breaking down the kingdom of God (Matt 16:8). This means war! Visionary plans at times will be frustrated, discouragement knocks continually at the door. Many things will work against you and the vision God gives. One missionary who worked among an unreached people was asked why he continued on when so few people were responding to the Gospel. His answer was simply that "God sent me here and He has not directed me otherwise."

God has called us to be faithful. He is responsible for the results. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light

and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (II Cor 4:16-18).

Godly Vision Requires Conviction

"... I have not hesitated ..." People of conviction are "trigger-happy" people. They are ready at the drop of the puck to serve the Lord. They really do believe God is at work and this belief is normative for their entire life. They are ready in season and out. Not careless, but sensing the urgency.

I know a believer who has a black belt in karate. One Sunday a friend playfully came up behind and poked him on the sides of his waist. Being taken by surprise, my friend, like lightning, brought his elbows in tight, trapping the prankster's hands while reflexively snapping his head back in a reverse "head-butt." Swiftly,

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Our convictions are revealed by our spiritual reflexes.

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Leadership Principles

Small Group Ministry—Part 1

by Jack Spender

The apostles and elders were problem solvers. Facing the needs of people or doctrinal error meant asking some tough questions and then working together before the Lord to find and apply good answers. Shepherding God's flock today raises just as many questions. Good questions like:

How can we promote quality fellowship in the assembly?

How can we train future elders?

How can we encourage younger men to consider pastoral ministry; not just teaching?

How can we reach out to neighborhoods some distance from the assembly?

As always, there are no easy answers. But there *are* answers, and by spending time in the Word, prayer and fellowship together, God can direct the assembly in ways that are both Biblical and intensely practical. One idea that has helped some groups address these questions is to develop a small group ministry within the assembly. For those who may not be familiar with small groups, let's take some time and consider the high points.

In this article we'll give a brief description of what is involved along with some Biblical support for the underlying principle. In future articles, we'll think about primary goals, suggestions on how to proceed, and finally a look at blessings and potential problems.

The idea of small or subgroups gathered for a special purpose is neither new nor uncommon. Elders meetings and Sunday school teachers meetings are examples. In essence, a small group ministry is just more of a good thing! A few people meeting informally as friends where all can par-

ticipate provides a personal touch so essential for individual growth steps. The heart of John Wesley's discipleship method in the 1700's was to provide shepherding care for groups of 10 people.

But what do the Scriptures say? Early in the wilderness journey of Israel, Moses' father-in-law Jethro observed the strain being placed upon Moses as he tried to bear the burdens of a multitude alone. He suggested delegating the work among rulers (or captains) of 1000's, 100's, 50's and 10's (Exodus 18). The idea was to involve others who could shepherd smaller groups of people. I realize that some good writers have been critical of Jethro's advice [notably C. H. McIntosh in Notes on the Pentateuch]. But with due respect to their position, I believe it is better to look favorably on Jethro's suggestion since he clearly stated "If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so..." (vs. 23 KJV). Reference to the enduring work of these positions throughout the OT, reinforce Jethro's word that "thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace."

The Lord Jesus certainly followed this plan. Early in His earthly ministry we read a sometimes overlooked but crucial statement in Luke 6:13 "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." One need only read the gospel records to see that the Lord Jesus gave the largest and most concentrated part of His ministry to the 12. He had many followers but His main focus was with a small group.

Before feeding 5000, the Lord gave instructions that the multitude be seated "by

fifties in a company" (Luke 9:14). It is significant that even with an unlimited supply of bread, care was taken that no one be overlooked, not to mention the help this would be to those serving. Evidently, the Lord felt this could be done best in smaller groups. Is this a hint that may help in our "spiritual" feeding of the flock of God?

When the church began and thousands were being saved in Jerusalem, we are told that gatherings of believers took place in two spheres: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house...." (Acts 2:46; 5:42). Some have held that these references to homes were limited to single families. However, this is unlikely since it was not uncommon for extended families to live together in one house in the ancient near East. In any case, the point remains that spiritual functions were not confined to one central meeting place only.

Indeed, writing toward the close of his long and fruitful labors, Paul reminded the Ephesian elders "I...taught you publicly and from house to house...." (Acts 20:20). It is interesting to note that nearly 25 years following Pentecost, Paul continued the practice begun in the early days of ministering to people in both large and small groups; in both public and private settings.

Getting into the homes of believers to instruct and encourage is vital to shepherding. Some functions of the church like the preaching of the Word work well in both large and small gatherings. But, as we shall see in future articles, there are other functions of fellowship that are much more effective in the intimate setting of a small number.



Biblical Foundations

The Role of Elder

by Chuck Gianotti

We do well to continually remind ourselves what our role as elders truly is. We can easily fill our time with things other people feel are urgent and must be dealt with right away, rather than what God says is important. Sometimes, it is we ourselves that have elevated certain things (such as perfectionism, pet issues, outside ministries, personal likes and dislikes, etc.) to a paralyzingly high priority. The important things get put on hold (or never get done) because the urgent gets done first! Familiar is the cry: "Woe is me!"

What are the most important things for an elder to spend his time doing? Here they are:

- 1. Manage the church of God** (1 Tim 3:5, 5:17). Elders oversee the life of the church (not get caught up in all the details) with the assistance of deacons and other godly leaders.
- 2. Shepherd the flock of God** (Acts 20:28ff, 1 Peter 5:1-3). Serving in humility, elders are to guide and protect the members of the fellowship. This means getting involved in their lives individually and in small groups.
- 3. Lead through example** (1 Peter 5:1-3) Elders are to provide a scriptural role model and set a pattern before the flock of a rightly ordered life with a single purpose, to glorify God.
- 4. Teach and exhort** (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9) Elders are to see that the flock is fed through insightful Biblical instruction and admonition.
- 5. Pray** (Acts 6: 4, James 5:14) Elders are to pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of the those in the congregation. This can be done both as a group of elders as well as individually. You should have a plan for praying for everyone under your care.
- 6. Refute those who contradict truth** (Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9). Elders are to confront those who are teaching error and who are continuing in behavior contradictory to Biblical truth.



Visionary Leadership (cont. from page 1)

he spun around almost “chopping” his surprised friend on the neck! Our convictions are revealed by our spiritual reflexes. There is an urgency in the kingdom of God, and vision is not wasted on the double-minded.

Godly Vision Requires Relevancy and Adaptability

“... publicly and from house to house.” (Acts 20:20). Paul was not hung up on the form of his ministry—he was willing to sacrifice personal preferences. “*I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some*” (I Cor 9:22). Sometimes vision is hindered by our “comfort zone” or “used-to zones”. We have all heard someone say, “That is not what we are used to.” To be sure, some forms are more comfortable to us than others. But, that is not the issue. Vision can die for lack of innovation, when a person is unwilling to let go of preferences. We should be ready to use whatever means are most effective (assuming these means do not violate clear teaching of scripture).

One church, in wanting to effectively reach young adults, started a “Saturday Night Live” outreach in the church basement, complete with drama, up-beat music,

and a gospel presentation. Others have effectively used a home bible study.

Some methods are time tested and very effective, others are innovative and can be equally effective. Some use summer camps to attract children to the gospel, others use sports clinics. Like Paul, who adapted his methods to gain a hearing, we too must be flexible. Whether donning a coat and tie to meet a businessman for lunch or putting on old pair of jeans to go talk to a street kid, we must be willing to adapt to the need of the moment.

Godly Vision Requires the Message of Repentance and Faith

“*I have declared ... that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus*” (Acts 20:21). The primary message of any godly vision must include the Good News of restoration to God. This was central to Paul’s ministry, for it is the whole point of the kingdom program. But, this also means repentance and faith must be the heart of *our* daily walk with God. We constantly fail as Christians and must therefore repeatedly turn to God. To do otherwise earns us the title “hypocrite”.

The infamous communist leader of

China, Chairman Mao Tse-Tung, spoke of “continual revolution” as the key to his political philosophy. As members of God’s kingdom, we need to be in continual revolt against the natural bent of our hearts. This is revitalizing in the Christian life. Daily confessing our sins to the Vision-Giver, daily offering our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin (Rom 6:11).

Why do we need this continuous revolution in our lives? Because our message can become stagnate, old. Our testimonies easily degenerate into historical background, rather than a living, dynamic story that attracts people to the Savior.

These reflections are certainly not *the* definitive list of required characteristics for a man of vision. But, certainly, the man who wants to be gripped by a vision from God must cultivate these Christ-like characteristics. The Apostle Paul left his standard of character with the young Ephesian elders. If they aspired to the same, God would provide them the vision for His work among them. We need men who are becoming a people of godly character. It is to these kind of people that God gives a vision. 

Wives' Corner

Are You Misunderstood

by Maria Forcucci

Last time (ESN Vol 3, No. 1) we discussed how we might imitate our Lord in not taking things too personally. One of the ways we said to eradicate this feminine flaw was to understand that not everyone will get to know the “real” us as elders’ wives. In this issue, we will look at our second challenge. It is very similar to the first one.

What might this be? We must allow ourselves to be misunderstood by others. Think about it—how many misunderstood people can we count in the Bible? We can name Job, all the prophets, Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, and so many others. If we’re honest, we’ll admit that no one in all history has been more misunderstood than the Lord Jesus Christ ... not even elders’ wives!

You mean you’ve never come across it? It happens in the whole church, but chiefly among those in leadership. If you excel at public ministry, there will be those who assert, “She’s never home. She needs to stay home and practice Titus 2!” Or consider the flip side if you’re a great mom and homemaker, “Yeah, she’s a real homebody. She doesn’t do much for the assembly.” Ok,

perhaps this is an extreme comparison (because we should always strive toward the proper balance between homemaking and service), but doesn’t it point out an issue that could drive most women, (elders’ wives in particular) to the brink of an identity crisis?

Let’s look at the Lord as our example. In John 6:53-65, Jesus explains that

No one in all of history has been more misunderstood than the Lord Jesus Christ.

eating His body and drinking His blood would bring eternal life and that this gift came from God the Father in Heaven. He was definitely misunderstood! But notice in v.66 that we don’t hear Him say to those walking away, “Well, I didn’t mean that you should actually eat my body. Fellas, hey, Fellas, I’ll try to be more clear next time. Come on, don’t leave.” He doesn’t apologize for His message like we are sometimes tempted to do, so others will get a “better” idea of us.

This is not at all to say that we shouldn’t be humble when misunderstandings occur. But if at any time we are stopped dead in our tracks because we are too busy analyzing others’ perception of us (real or imagined) we are not following Jesus’ example. While we want to be excellent examples to onlookers, we do so with the intent of personifying Christ, NOT to gain acceptance or approval. As women, we can fall prey to such maneuvers. However, we need to exemplify our ultimate acceptance by the Lord, and exude confidence that if we are in error we are willing for the Lord to work in us.

Whether we are truly being misunderstood or just imagining it, Isaiah 26:3 gives us some insight as to where our focus should be, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth Thee.” (KJV) Then we can proclaim with the writer of Proverbs 28:1, “... the righteous are bold as a lion.” 

Meditation—Of Frazzle and Rest

Years ago a former “cubicle-mate” of mine where I worked woefully opined how life is filled with inane details and unremitting little pressures. I can still see in my mind his exasperated look after some 28 years. There was no joy—implacable demands consumed his time and energy.

Driving during rush hour affirms this observation in the distant look of many drivers’ faces, rushing home to their next responsibility. The constant barrage of choices, commitments and demands can wear a person down to a dullness of spirit and soul. But, the Lord’s solution remains the same to day as it did in the time of Moses. You

might not think wandering in the desert for 40 years had much tension to it, but judging from the brief history we do have of that time period, there was much stress and strain, especially for the leaders of God’s people.

In Moses final blessing to Israel, just before he died and just before they invaded the land God promised them, this great man of faith gave the secret to contentment he had learned through years of struggling with life’s issues. “*Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders*” Deuteronomy 33:12. We need to “rest” in the Lord. He is immovable, no one can break into his fortress, no one can snatch us out of his hand or off of this shoulders (for he is high and lifted up – Isaiah 6:1).

Our Lord Jesus not only taught us to

come to him for rest (Matt 11:28-31) but he really does invite us to join him in resting (Mark 6:31). I am not thinking here so much of the eternal rest from our works (as in salvation). But, if coming to Christ is described as “rest”, then walking with Him and serving Him should also be characterized as resting in Him as well.

In your work as an elder, are you resting in him? Demands of the church weighing heavy on you. Balancing family and work adding to the burden? Others may have expectations of you, be disappointed

Serving Him should be characterized as resting in Him.

in your perceived shepherding deficiencies and be giving constant words of “advice” on how

you can do your ministry better. Your personal shortcomings, time limitations and mistakes may discourage you. Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed?

Why not take a few minutes, stop what you are doing, talk with your Lord, take refuge in Him and relax. Think about His greatness, His compassion, His love—and His immensity and His strength. All is well, because the Lord of the universe has you right on his shoulders. But, remember this one thing. The only One who ultimately matters, the Lover of your soul—He loves you and is your shield. Enjoy the thought that you are His “beloved”!

Adapted from a recent E-Med (itations), a weekly e-mail devotional. To subscribe, just sent an e-mail to emed@bible-equip.com, with the word “subscribe” in the subject line.



From the Q-Files

At the outset of World War II, Britain was still scrounging for any weapons adequate to the task of war. They decided to de-mothball a piece of light field artillery which dated back to the Boer War. The five-man crew they also rounded up had a curious system for firing the armament. Precisely three seconds prior to discharging the gun, two of the men would snap to attention until all was silent again. None of the experts or young officers who were consulted could deduce the point of the exercise. Finally they brought in a wizened retired artillery colonel. He watched the exercise for a moment. Then, jarred by an old memory, recognition flickered in his eyes: “I have it. They are holding the horses.”

The pull of habit, tradition, human nature, and institutional inertia were so powerful it failed to occur to anyone for years to question the fact that there were no longer any horses to hold. There had always been five men to an artillery team and even if two of the men were no longer needed to quiet the horses, no one was prepared to question a system that had served them well for more than a generation.

Taken from Robert Nisbet’s amazing *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary*.

A golf club is almost useless in my hands. A golf club in Tiger Wood’s hands is a 4 Major Golf Championship winner. It depends on whose hands it’s in...

A rod in my hands will keep away a wild animal. A rod in Moses’ hands will part the mighty sea. It depends on whose hands it’s in...

Nails in my hands might produce a bird house. Nails in Christ Jesus’ hands will produce salvation for the entire world.

It depends on whose hands they’re in...

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

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