

*the Lord in whom they had come to believe. (Act 14:21-23)*

Elders are to watch over themselves and the flock and protect them from wolves deceivers.

*[Paul] sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them . . . Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. (Acts 20:17-18, 28-30)*

Please, answer these questions:

- What are some more of the tasks that overseers perform?
- What are some more of the spiritual activities

of overseers?

### **In the Church Epistles**

God's Spirit gives gifts to some people to be overseers of churches and cells. Romans 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, Phil. 1

*We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us . . . the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8) And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then . . . , forms of leadership. (1 Corinthians 12:28) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11)*

There are two kinds of workers in a local Christian fellowship.

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace*

*ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.”  
What they said pleased the whole community,  
(Acts 6:2-5)*

The apostles and elders in Jerusalem heard  
and decided hard questions.

*Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were  
appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this  
question with the apostles and the elders. So  
they were sent on their way by the church. . . .  
When they came to Jerusalem, they were  
welcomed by the church and the apostles and  
the elders, and they reported all that God had  
done with them. (Act 15:2-4)*

Please, answer these questions:

- What are some of the tasks that overseers perform?
- What are some of the spiritual activities of overseers?

Please, answer these questions:

- How do overseers become competent to do their work?
- How can followers recognize believers who would be good overseers?

### **In the Pastoral Epistles**

Overseers devote themselves to teaching the Word of God and training others to serve as overseers.

*You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.  
(2 Timothy 2:1-2)*

Elders are to be appointed in every town.

*I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. . . as God's steward. . . (Tit*

*Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it — not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)*

**Please, answer these questions:**

- How is the work of an overseer like that of a shepherd?
- What reward is offered to those who serve as overseers?

**In the Jerusalem Church**

The apostles themselves served as overseers in

*labour in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and, “The labourer deserves to be paid.” (1Tim. 5:17-18)*

Overseers who sin are to be rebuked publicly.

*Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear. (1 Timothy 5:19-20)*

Please, answer these questions:

- How are new overseers trained to do their work?
- What are some requirements for becoming a full-time overseer?

**In the General Epistles**

Not all followers should become overseers, for overseers must serve as examples to the followers of Jesus.

*commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.” So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. (Exodus 18:19-24)*

Please, answer these questions:

- Why is it important to have overseers?
- What kind of men can become overseers?
- What different group sizes need an overseer?

### **In the Gospels**

Jesus knew that his followers need people who will love them, teach them, and lead them. He taught that he himself is the good Shepherd of his flock. He said:

*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock,*

*gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. (1Peter 5:1-3)*

Please, answer these questions:

- What are some duties of overseers?
- What is the proper motive for doing the work of an overseer?

### **Practical Advice**

In most cases, a new overseer should be an adult man who already has a home and a family that he leads. Overseeing a church or cell is much like leading one's own family. Unmarried young men usually are not respected and do not know how to care for others.

In a new church or cell of new believers, often the best overseer will be one of the new believers, because he will understand them and they will respect him. However, a new believer should not be given the title of overseer. Rather,

Mr. Trainer explains, “In the same way, new believers need someone to care for them. We call such care-givers sometimes called pastors, shepherds, elders, and ministers.

Mr. Trainer adds, “Several people have begun following Jesus in your town. If I will train you, will you become their overseer, teach them and protect them?”

Mr. Believer replies, “I would like to help the new followers, but I do not know how to be an overseer. What must an overseer do?”

Mr. Trainer suggests, “Let us read in the Bible about overseers.”

## **What the Bible Says**

### **About Israel**

A long time ago, when the Eternal God helped the Israelite people to escape from Egypt, Moses was their only leader. Every day, from morning

the apprentice. In this way, each apprentice overseer can train another apprentice overseer and start many new churches and cells. A useful programme with materials that can help you to do that is called “Train & Multiply™”. Write to [pwr@trainandmultiply.com](mailto:pwr@trainandmultiply.com) to ask about this programme in your language.

After an overseer has been trained for about a year, his church or the mother church can lay hands on him and call him an overseer, pastor or elder. This is called ordination. Most men should start a church, oversee it and help it start another church, before they go away to a Bible school.

If a church grows big enough to afford to pay an overseer, then the members can collect tithes and offerings from themselves and pay the overseer a salary. An overseer who receives a salary must work full-time as an overseer and not be involved in business ventures or have another job.

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*doing nothing on the basis of partiality. Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (1 Timothy 5:19-22)*

3. Overseers may become greedy for money.

*Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it--not for sordid gain but eagerly. (1 Peter 5:2)*

4. Overseers may take too much authority.

*Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:3)*

5. Overseers may try to be too important.

*I have written something to the church; but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing in spreading false charges against us. And not content with those charges, he refuses to welcome the friends, and even prevents those*

## **Practical work**

- Make a list of all the personal qualities of an overseer and ask the Lord to help you.
- Make a list of all the tasks and activities of an overseer and ask the Lord to help you.
- Teach your church or cell about overseers, using the Bible passages in this booklet.
- Choose some men in your church whom you would like to train to become overseers.

## **Conclusion**

The Lord Jesus will give a reward to everyone who oversees his churches and cells, if they do so with love and wisdom. The Holy Spirit of God gives special ability to those whom he calls to be overseers. As an overseer, you can help your church to love God and each other, obey the Word of God, and help others to become followers of Jesus. You can also train other men to become apprentices overseers and start new churches and cells.