

They serve the Christian community and others respect them in return.

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well. (Romans 16:1-2) Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. (1 Corinthians 16:15-16) Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant . . . is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. (Col 1:7)

Please, answer these questions:

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

In the Gentile Churches

The prophets and teachers who ministered in the church at Antioch sent out apostles to start new churches.

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. . . . While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

Paul appointed elders for every church where they made new followers.

They had proclaimed the good news . . . and had made many disciples. . . . There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, “It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.” And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to

must be above reproach. . . . Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be serious. . . . And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. (1 Timothy 3:1-10)

Appoint elders in every town, . . . someone who is blameless For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless . . . able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

A Christian fellowship should pay an overseer who works hard, when they can.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who 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)

In the Jerusalem Church

The apostles themselves served as overseers in the Jerusalem church. Acts 4 & 5

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:33-35) . . . As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 5:41-42)

The twelve apostles later appointed helpers whom they put in charge of special tasks.

The twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait

Overseers pray for the sick.

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. (James 5:14-16)

Overseers must serve willingly, not greedily, as an example to the flock.

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. (1Peter 5:1-3)

one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. (John 10:14-17)

After Jesus died and came back to life, he appeared to some of his followers.

Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17)

Later Peter wrote a letter to the followers and said:

Every temporary overseer should have a trainer who will mentor him. A trainer is another overseer who has more experience. The trainer should meet with the apprentice overseer regularly, and do these things:

- Listen to him report what his church or cell needs now.
- Help him plan how he will help his church or cell,
- Teach him from the Bible,
- Assign to him a lesson that will help him to meet the current needs of his church or cell,
- Look over the lesson he has completed, or have him talk about it.
- Practice together new skills that the apprentice overseer needs to learn.
- Pray for the apprentice overseer and for the people in his church.
- Do not spend much time with problems.

till evening, he answered people's questions and resolved their disputes. He grew very tired and people complained, because he could not help all of them.

When Moses father-in-law came to visit him, he saw how busy Moses was and gave to him this advice:

“Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so

from obeying Christ.

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.

Dangers to Overseers

Sometimes, an overseer in a Christian fellowship may do something wrong. Overseers must often ask the Lord to help them to overcome temptation. Some common sins of overseers are these:

1. Overseers may take away disciples after themselves.

Savage wolves will come in among you, not

Introduction

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to oversee the followers of Jesus in your church or cell.

Story

Mr. Trainer asks Mr. Believer, “Would anybody leave a new baby out in the fields to grow up by itself?”

Mr. Believer laughs and replies, “No, its parents would bring the new baby into their home and care for it.”

Mr. Trainer asks Mr. Believer, “Would a shepherd leave his sheep to wander about by themselves?”

Mr. Believer laughs again and replies, “No, a good shepherd will guide his sheep and protect them from wolves. As the flock grows, shepherds will train new shepherds to help him care for the sheep.

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 who want to do so and expels them from the church. (3 John 1:9-10)

Please, answer these questions:

- What are some things you would try not to do as an overseer?
- What should you do if an overseer does not behave properly?

Contents

Introduction	1
Story	1
What the Bible Says About Overseers	1
In Ancient Israel	2
In the Gospels	4
In the Jerusalem Church	7
In the Gentile Churches	9
In the Letters to the Churches	11
In the Letters to Pastors	13
In the Letters to Christians	15
Practical Advice	17
Dangers to Overseers	20
Story Continued	23
Practical work	23
Conclusion	24

— forming tiny groups so that everyone can take part and serve one another,

— starting daughter churches and new cells,

— training new leaders in new churches and cells.

- 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, to obey the Word of God, and you can also train other men as apprentices overseers and start new cells.

A Paul & Timothy Training Booklet

Feed My Sheep

Overseers in Christian Churches and Cells

