

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 warning did Paul give to the overseers?
- What are some more tasks that overseers perform?

In the Letters to the Churches

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 to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:1-2)

on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote 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?

would be good overseers?

In the Letters to Pastors

Overseers devote themselves to teaching the Word of God, equipping all believers for ministries and training new 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 1:5-7)

Overseers and their helpers, the deacons, must meet certain requirements. 1 Tim. 3, Tit. 1

The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop

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 are some attitudes of overseers?
- What reward does God offer to those who serve as overseers?

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 for their work?
- What are some requirements for becoming a full-time overseer?

In the Letters to Christians

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

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. (James 3:1-2)

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 knows 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,

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, a new believer can be called a “provisional elder” or “apprentice overseer” until he has proven himself and the believers have come to trust him.

Mr. Trainer explains, “In the same way, new believers need someone to care for them. We call such caregivers ‘overseers’. Overseers are also 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, teaching them and protecting 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 Overseers

In Ancient 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

Always deal with new activities or ministries that will help to develop in the new church.

Very soon after an apprentice overseer has started his training and is overseeing a church or cell, he can begin training another apprentice overseer. The trainer will provide the overseer with advice and materials with which to train the apprentice. In this way, each apprentice overseer can train another apprentice overseer and start many new churches and cells. A useful program with materials that can help you to do that is called “Train & Multiply™”. Write to pwr@trainandmultiply.com to ask about this program 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 commissioning is sometimes called ordination. If you call it ordination be very sure that you require only what the New Testament requires for it. To add human requirements stifles new churches’ progress and keeps them

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sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. (Act 20:29-30)

2. Overseers may be caught sinning.

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. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, 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)

Story Continued

Mr. Believer says to Mr. Trainer, “I see that overseers take care of the Lord's people like a shepherd takes care of the sheep. How can I get started doing the work of an overseer?”

Mr. Trainer replies to Mr. Believer, “Well, here are some practical work assignments. Let us make a plan together for how you will do each one.”

Practical work

- Make a list of all the personal qualities of an overseer and ask the Lord to help you.
- Make plans for all the tasks and activities that God requires that the congregation do, that you will oversee. These must include:
 - solving problems,
 - maintaining fellowship between members and with other churches,