

QUIET TIME

Theme: Leaders (elders)

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

- Day 1 John 10:11-16
Christ is the Shepherd of his flock (the Church)
- Day 2 Ephesians 1:17-23
Christ is the Head of his Body (the Church)
- Day 3 Exodus 18:17-23
The Old Testament prerequisites for a leader
- Day 4^{BS} 1 Timothy 3:1-7
The New Testament prerequisites for a leader (cf. also verse 14-15)
- Day 5 Titus 1:5-9
The New Testament prerequisites for a leader
- Day 6 1 Peter 5:1-7
The tasks and attitudes of a leader
- Day 7 Matthew 20:20-28
A leader is not a ruler with a position, but a servant (cf. Also Matthew 23:8-14)
- Day 8 Titus 2:1-8
A leader teaches what is in accord with sound doctrine
- Day 9 Acts 20:17-31
The example of Paul as a servant leader
- Day 10 3 John 1:5-11
An example of good and bad leaders in the congregation
- Think about Colossians 4:3-4.
A possible prayer for God to give new opportunities and open hearts.
 - Pray that God gives new opportunities for ministry and open hearts for his message.
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: Leaders (elders)

Read study 25 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: Elders

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method. The Bible passage is: **1 Timothy 3:1-7,14-15**

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

LEADERS

1 Peter 5:2

Be shepherds of God's flock
that is under your care,
serving as overseers –
not because you must,
but because you are willing,
as God wants you to be;
not greedy for money, but eager to serve.

1 Peter 5:2 (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

4. Review of the Bible books

All 39 books of the Old Testament
All 27 books of the New Testament

25. Leaders (elders)

A. Jesus Christ is the supreme and eternal Leader of the Church

Read Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4.

Jesus Christ is the Founder, Builder, Spiritual Foundation and Owner of the Christian Church in the whole world! He is the Supreme and Eternal Leader of the Church, the Head of the Body, the Chief-Pastor (Shepherd) and Bishop (Overseer) of the Worldwide (Greek: *katholikos*, end of 2nd century A.D.) Church and of every local congregation! No human being may assume the place of Jesus Christ. No organisation on earth may take the place of Christ's Body!

Jesus Christ exercises his authority in the worldwide Church by means of the Bible (John 8:31-32; Hebrews 1:1-2), by means of the Holy Spirit who always speaks in accordance with the Bible (John 16:13-15; Ephesians 5:16) and by means of the body of elders in the local congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:14).

B. The apostles of Jesus Christ are the foundational leaders of the Church

The word 'apostle' means 'one sent out'.

The apostles of Jesus Christ

Read Mark 3:13-19. The apostles of Jesus Christ were a unique group of men, because Jesus Christ personally chose them, called them, equipped them and sent them out to be his witnesses during his life on earth!

Read John 14:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:8. The apostles of Jesus Christ received unique tasks. They had to proclaim the truth, record this truth in the New Testament and found the first congregations among the Jews, Samaritans (half-Jews) and Gentiles (non-Jews). That is why the Bible calls them the foundation of the historical Church (Ephesians 2:20)!

Read Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18; John 20:21-23. The apostles of Jesus Christ received unique authority. They received authority to include (*Read* Acts 8:14-17) or exclude (*Read* Acts 5:1-11) people from the kingdom of God (the Church). They received authority to appoint the first instituted leaders (elders) in the historical churches (Acts 14:23). They received authority to establish the sound doctrine for the whole world-wide Church (Acts 15:28-29). And they received authority to command Christians to obey their teachings and instructions (Acts 16:4; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Read Acts 1:21-26; Ephesians 2:19-20; 3:4-5; Revelation 21:14. 'The apostles of Jesus Christ' consisted of the eleven disciples of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul. They have no successors, because only they were chosen, called, equipped and appointed by Jesus Christ to fulfil this task (Mark 3:13-19; 1 Corinthians 1:1) and at the same time no other person fulfils the requirement of being an apostle of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:21-22)!

Paul is the only person within the salvation history of the Bible and also outside the history of the Bible that has been set apart from birth and later called by name to be an apostle of Christ Jesus *after* Christ had ascended into heaven (Acts 9:1-30; 21:39 – 22:16; 26:1-29; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 9:1-2; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1). Besides Paul, no one else within the salvation history of the Bible and also outside the history of the Bible has been used by Christ to lay the foundation of the historical Church (especially the Church among the Gentiles) (Galatians 2:8), perform the signs that mark an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12) and to complete the revelation of Jesus Christ in the New Testament Scriptures (all Paul's Letters; cf. Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Ephesians 3:4-6)!

Some people who arrogantly claim that they are apostles like Paul do this without any biblical warrant. Their names are nowhere recorded in the Bible as apostles! They had no part in laying the foundation of the historical Church. They had no part in completing the New Testament Scriptures! Moreover, they most often do not have the things that mark an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Matthew 7:22-23). Jesus Christ himself and Paul warn Christians against false apostles (Revelation 2:2; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; cf. Matthew 7:15).

The apostles of the churches

In the New Testament there are also 'apostles of the congregations (churches)' (2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25), but they are only representatives or envoys of local congregations, missionaries sent out to plant and build up new congregations (Acts 14:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:6-7). They have been given the spiritual gift, special ability or special office of being an apostle (a missionary) (1 Corinthians 12:11,28-29; Ephesians 4:7,11-12). The greatest spiritual gifts or offices (not positions of power) in the Church are these (1) apostles (missionaries), (2) prophets (preachers) and (3) teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28; cf. Ephesians 4:11).

C. The elders are the instituted leaders of the congregations

The Bible teaches and commands *shared leadership* and *servant leadership*! Elders are always appointed in the plural and elders are servants, not rulers!

The elders in the Old Testament Church

Read Psalm 107:32; Exodus 18:13-26; Deuteronomy 1:9-18. During the Old Testament period the elders were the heads of the tribes of Israel (Exodus 3:16; Deuteronomy 31:28; Jeremiah 19:1; Ezra 6:7) or the most trusted servants in the household of the king (2 Samuel 12:17). Every significant city or town had elders who sat in the gate (Deuteronomy 21:3; Ruth 4:2; Proverbs 31:23). Their task was to be overseers of the people and judges in the disputes of the people.

The elders in the New Testament Jewish Church

Read Acts 2:42 and 1 Timothy 5:17. During the New Testament period after Pentecost the disciples were brought together to form an independent congregation at Jerusalem. In the local congregations the apostles of Jesus Christ functioned as one of the elders of the local church (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Peter 5:1; 3 John 1). New elders (Acts 11:29-30) were probably chosen in the same way as elders were chosen during the Old Testament period (Deuteronomy 1:13) and as deacons were chosen during the New Testament period (Acts 6:1-7), namely, by the believers (and not by the leaders alone). Two important tasks of the elders were prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

The elders in the New Testament Gentile Church

Read Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. The apostles and their co-workers also founded new Christian congregations among the Gentiles. Because the Gentiles traditionally had no elders, the apostles and their co-workers appointed the first elders (note the plural) to lead those congregations (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 3:14-15; Titus 1:5-9).

The body of elders

According to the New Testament every congregation was led by a group of men, called 'the body of elders' (Greek: presbiterion) (1 Timothy 4:14; cf. 5:17-22) and never by only one priest, minister or pastor (missionary, initiator or founder). Thus, the leadership in every congregation should always be a shared leadership! The body (or: council) of elders shared the four main tasks of elders. This is also how it should be today!

D. The terminology used for elders

Read Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5,7; 1 Peter 5:1-2. The New Testament also uses the terms 'overseers' and 'shepherds' for 'elders'. These three terms are

interchangeable and all three refer to one and the same office: namely the office of elder¹.

The expression 'elder' refers to his office, his spiritual maturity, abilities, experience and the respect he is due.

The expressions 'overseer' and 'shepherd' refer to *the tasks of elders* (their job-description). They do NOT refer to *positions above the elders* as happened in later Church History when they were called 'bishops' and 'priests or pastors'!

E. The biblical requirements for elders

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9 and Hebrews 13:7. Men may only be chosen and appointed as elders when they fulfil the following biblical requirements:

- An elder must be self-controlled, especially regarding his temper and with respect to women and money.
- If an elder is married he must be an example of faithfulness to his one wife.
- If he has children he must direct the affairs of his family according to the Bible and teach his children to believe in Jesus Christ and obey Jesus Christ. He must teach his children to obey and respect their parents.
- An elder may not be a new believer. He must be spiritually mature (a disciple).
- He must have a reasonable amount of knowledge of the Bible (cf. 15 studies of the Old Testament and 15 studies of the New Testament) and hold on to the sound doctrine of the Bible.
- He must be able to use the Bible to preach, teach and correct people and to answer their questions.
- He must set an example that can be imitated.

F. The biblical tasks of elders

First task: elders are the shepherds and overseers of God's flock

Read Acts 20:17,28-30; 1 Peter 5:1-2.

Shepherds (Latin: pastors)

Elders have the responsibility to shepherd and feed the members of the congregation; to protect them and to lead them to growth and wellbeing, just as Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of his worldwide Church (Psalm 23; John 10:16; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4). The elders are responsible for the members who have needs, such as young believers, the widows and orphans, the lost, the sick, the disabled, the elderly and the poor. They visit the sick and pray for them

¹ An 'office' is a public task or service to which Christ and the elders of the congregation calls and appoints someone. This person has authority to execute that task. Examples of offices are: elder, missionary, evangelist, shepherd, teacher, deacon, group leader, youth leader, etc. Except for the elders these offices are NOT the leaders of the congregation, but function in their tasks under the body of the elders!

(James 5:14). They protect the members against false teachers and against people who want to draw the members away from the congregation (Acts 20:29-31).

Overseers (Greek: bishops)

Elders have the responsibility to oversee the members of the congregation, just as Jesus Christ is the Overseer (Bishop) of his worldwide Church (1 Peter 2:25). Every elder keeps watch over the other elders and together they oversee the members of the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). In this way every elder remains accountable to Jesus Christ and to the other elders in the body of elders. No congregation may have only one leader (priest, minister or pastor), but must have 'a body of elders' (1 Timothy 4:14). The elders fulfil the leadership tasks together as a team. Hopefully this will prevent authoritarian leadership in the congregation.

Second task: Elders are the managers and directors of God's household

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; Titus 1:7. Elders are responsible to manage and direct the activities and possessions of the congregation. Not the deacons, but the elders have been entrusted with the task to manage and direct the affairs of the congregation (1 Timothy 5:17).

Leaders.

In 1 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy the task of elders is described as 'a leader that walks in the front' in order to give direction and set an example (Greek: *prohistamenos*).

Managers.

In Titus the task of elders is described as 'a steward, economist, manager or administrator of a house' (Greek: *oikonomos*). The management style should be to serve!

When an elder can no longer manage his own family (1 Timothy 3:4-5), or his wife and children need more of his attention, he should resign from being an elder so that he can give the necessary attention to his family. There must be a balance between all his responsibilities.

The following functions or tasks with respect to people and activities fall under the leadership and management of the elders. Elders must delegate enough tasks to members, but remain responsible for these tasks!

The elders lead the meetings of the congregation.

They promote and lead the weekly meetings such as the worship service and the meetings for small groups for Bible Study, prayer and fellowship (Acts 2:42). They promote and lead the special meetings such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, the church festivals, marriages, funerals, house visitation and gatherings where the members are equipped.

The elders lead the missionary task of the congregation.

They stimulate the members to pray for the lost in the world (1 Timothy 2:1-2), to have good influence in their society (Matthew 5:14-16) and to do evangelism within the family and within their society (Matthew 10:32-37; Acts 5:42). They promote missionary work to other provinces and countries. They support churches that are oppressed and persecuted and other Christian organisations (Romans 15:23-24; Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16; 3 John 5-8) (Read 2 Corinthians 8).

The elders lead the training programmes in the congregation.

They instruct new members for confession of faith and baptism. They are responsible that the members are made disciples of Jesus Christ and are equipped for various works of service in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-14). They are responsible for the training of leaders of the following groups: evangelism, missions, Sunday School, youth club, Bible Study, etc.).

The elders are responsible that the members function well.

They urge members to love in their relationships, to good works in their activities and to faithfulness in meeting together (Hebrews 10:24-25).

They stimulate members to have a task in the congregation that corresponds to their talents and spiritual gifts. They help members to discover their spiritual gifts and create ministries where these talents and gifts could be employed. They are responsible for the behaviour of members and for the orderly use of the spiritual gifts within the meetings (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 14:26-40; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 John 4:1). They stimulate and oversee personal help in the congregation (Acts 18:24-28). They rebuke, correct and encourage members with patience and instruction (2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 2:15). They organise pastoral care in the congregation (1 Thessalonians 5:12-15). They maintain Christian discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

Third task: elders are the teachers of God's Word

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9. The elders are responsible for the proclamation and teaching of the Bible, to rebuke, correct and advise people on the basis of the Bible.

The responsibilities of the elders with respect to the Bible are the following:

They preach God's Word to non-believers, non-Christians and Christians (1 Timothy 5:17).

They use the Bible for discussions in small groups with non-believers or believers in order to discover the truth (Acts 17:1-4,11).

They teach the members the whole will of God as it has been revealed in the Bible (Acts 20:20,27).

They teach people to obey all that Jesus Christ has commanded (Matthew 28:20a).

They use the Bible to admonish believers, to encourage the timid, to help the weak, to be patient with everyone, to warn lazy people and to instruct people who oppose them (Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15; 2 Timothy 2:23-26).

They discuss and make decisions with respect to Christians doctrine (Acts 15; 2 Timothy 1:13) and refute all false teachings (Titus 1:9).

Elders are not per se specially educated full-timers.

During the New Testament period there were no full-time leaders (priest, ministers, pastors or teachers). Nevertheless, the elders should have a good grip on the sound Christian teaching (Titus 1:9) and should be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2).

The apostles received on-the-job-training from Jesus Christ. Likewise, these men often received on-the-job-training for their tasks. For example, Timothy received on-the-job-training from Paul.

The Bible does NOT teach anywhere that only elders who have received formal training in a Bible School or Theological Seminary are qualified to preach, teach, baptise, administer the Lord's Supper and appoint people to offices.

Young elders have the same authority as old elders.

God gives young elders responsibility and authority to teach and train, and if necessary, to rebuke and correct people who are older than themselves (1 Timothy 1:3-5; 4:11-13; 2 Timothy 2:22-26). Not only young elders, but also old elders need to clothe themselves 'in the same way' with humility (1 Peter 5:5).

Fourth task: Elders are the servants of God and people

Read Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:2-3.

Elders are entrusted with the task to serve the members willingly, eagerly and with unselfish dedication. Elders are servants of God and of people. Service is not only their task, but also their style of leadership!

Leadership among Christians is completely the opposite of leadership in the world. Jesus Christ and the apostle Peter forbid Christian leaders, including elders who have pastoral or teaching responsibilities "to lord it over" the people God entrusted to them. Authoritarian leadership is forbidden among Christians. Instead of leading by barking commands, elders must set the example of what the

Christian life and ministry is and walk in front so that the members may follow them freely. Instead of demanding that the members serve the elders, the elders MUST SERVE the members (Luke 22:25-27).

G. The appointment of elders

The book of Acts teaches that the Holy Spirit appoints elders to be the overseers and shepherds of the congregation (Acts 20:17,28). The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible (2 Timothy 3:17; 2 Peter 1:19-20) and the Bible teaches how elders and the members ought to conduct themselves in the Church (1 Timothy 3:14-15)!

The Holy Spirit also recommends the faithfulness and abilities of these men to the members of the congregation (Luke 16:10; 2 Corinthians 10:18; 2 Timothy 2:2).

The Holy Spirit also gives to the elders the authority that belongs to their appointment (cf. Matthew 18:17-18) and, if necessary, spiritual gifts that enable them to fulfil their tasks (1 Timothy 4:14).

If an apostle (Acts 1:23) or deacons (Acts 6:1-5) in the Bible were chosen by the members of the congregation, then the elders were probably also chosen by the members of the congregation (cf. Deuteronomy 1:13) and appointed to be the elders by the existing body of elders (Acts 6:4,6). In Jerusalem the apostles functioned as the first body of elders (cf. 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1). In the newly formed congregations the first body of elders should be appointed by the Christians in the congregation under guidance of the missionaries or church planters (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

H The accountability of elders

The elders are accountable to God with respect to their biblical tasks (Hebrews 13:17) and are also accountable to the congregation with respect to how these tasks are fulfilled within the congregation (cf. Acts 14:26-27).

I. The term of office of elders

Because the Bible sets no term of office for elders, a congregation may decide the term of office for its elders. But in order to avoid abuse of the office and in order to give other men a chance to be an elder, many congregations limit the term of office to about 4 years.

J. Deacons

Only three congregations in the New Testament appointed deacons. They do not lead the congregation as a whole, but serve by leading certain tasks in the congregation.