

Meetings That Work

*Detailed Outline
Part 1 of 4*

I. The Importance of Elders' Meetings

1 Timothy 3:1, 1 Peter 5:2

A. Meetings affect the spiritual health of the flock.

1. Issues involved in elders' meetings
 - a) Problem solving
 - b) Decision making
 - c) Coordination
 - d) Information sharing
 - e) Brainstorming/planning
 - f) Study
 - g) Prayer/intercession
2. Meetings' adverse effects on pastoral leadership
 - a) Meetings can have no direction.
 - b) Meetings can be unproductive.
 - c) Meetings tend to deal only with facilities and finances.
 - d) Meetings tend to have little spiritual life.
3. Meetings' positive effects on pastoral leadership
 - a) Godly decisions are reached.
 - b) Direction is given.
 - c) Problems are identified and solved.
 - d) Vision is cast.
 - e) Sin is confronted.
4. Meetings help elders organize to provide good leadership to the flock.
 - a) The flock desires to be cared for.
 - b) The flock desires to be protected.
 - c) The flock desires to be fed.

- d) The flock desires to be challenged.
- e) The flock desires to be given fresh vision and new ideas.

B. Meetings build character.

1. Elders' meetings help develop character and people skills.
 - a) Meetings help develop love and compassion for people.
 - b) Meetings help develop wisdom and counsel.
 - c) Meetings help in ability to lovingly confront people and issues.
 - d) Meetings help with sensitivity in dealing with complaints and questions.
2. Elders' meetings help spotlight areas of weakness that need improvement.
 - a) All leaders have weaknesses and character flaws.
 - b) All leaders have imperfect skills and annoying eccentricities.
 - c) All leaders have blind spots and imbalances.
3. Elders' meetings help reshape us more into the image of Christ.
 - a) Meetings help us grow in our strength of character.
 - b) Meetings help us grow in self-control.
 - c) Meetings help us grow in forgiveness and humility.
 - d) Meetings help us grow in truthfulness and spiritual wisdom.
 - e) Meetings help us grow in knowledge of the Word.
 - f) Meetings help us grow in pastoral skills.

C. Meetings develop leadership skills and godly wisdom.

1. Each elder has unique wisdom and skills to contribute to the group.
 - a) Working together promotes learning from each other (Prov. 27:17).
 - b) Working together promotes teamwork and communication skills.
 - c) Working together promotes tact with people and personal organization.
 - d) Working together promotes leadership abilities and shepherding skills (Prov. 13:20).

D. Meetings enhance group morale and accountability.

1. Elders must actively work at building a community spirit.
 - a) By genuinely caring for one another
 - b) By becoming Christ-like servants to one another
 - c) By praying for and encouraging one another
 - d) By caring for each other's family

2. Elders must actively provide for mutual accountability.
 - a) To protect against misuse of time and gifting
 - b) To protect against procrastination and laziness
 - c) To protect against misguidedness and forgetfulness

E. Meetings train future elders.

Elders must be responsible for preparing future shepherds (2 Tim. 2:2).

1. By identifying men who have a desire to serve
2. By identifying men who have the character to lead God's people
3. By identifying men who are trustworthy in character and capable of teaching

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II. Helps for Achieving Effective Elders' Meetings

A. Unproductive meetings

Not all elders' meetings are productive.

1. Too much time is spent on facilities and finance, not on spiritual matters.
2. Little or no time is spent in prayer.
3. Participants wander from the agenda and fail to stay on track.
4. The group gets tied up on trivial matters and fails to reach conclusions.
5. Inadequate thought is given to meeting preparation.
6. Certain people talk too much.

B. Biblically qualified participants

1. Effective meetings require the right participants—those whom the Holy Spirit chooses.
... The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matt. 20:28 ESV)
 - a) Biblical qualifications protect the church from unfit men.
 - b) Biblical qualifications set a standard for continual evaluation.
2. Biblically qualified men are more able to work well together, conduct good meetings, and make wise decisions.
 - a) Biblically qualified men are gentle and temperate (self-controlled).
 - b) Biblically qualified men are sensible and not pugnacious (not a fighter).
 - c) Biblically qualified men are not new converts.
 - d) Biblically qualified men are peaceable and not self-willed.
 - e) Biblically qualified men are not quick-tempered, but are just.
 - f) Biblically qualified men are neither domineering nor authoritarian.
 - g) Biblically qualified men are sound in doctrine.

III. Biblical Ground Rules of Conduct for Meetings

A. Conduct yourself with a Christ-like attitude (Phil. 2:27).

Christ's attitude of humility should permeate every meeting and shape the attitude of every participant.

1. An elder's attitude is not self-centered or conceited (Phil. 2:3–4).
2. An elder's attitude is not prideful (Rom. 12:10b).
3. An elder does not provoke nor envy another (Gal. 5:26).

B. Conduct yourself with Christ-like love.

The Lord's command sets the standard of conduct for all meetings (John 13:34).

1. Love helps elders to overcome their fears of one another's differences.
2. Love helps elders to understand one another better.
3. Love helps elders to disagree with grace.
4. Love helps elders to be less defensive and more open to others' ideas.
5. Love helps elders to listen better and to cooperate more.
6. Love helps elders to take more risks and fight less.

C. Conduct yourself as a Christian servant.

For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. (Luke 22:27)

The Lord Jesus taught servant leadership and modeled it for His disciples.

1. Elders serve one another.
2. Elders act humbly toward one another.
3. Elders live in brotherly community.
4. Elders do not employ power plays nor control tactics.
5. Elders do not use manipulative tactics.

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IV. Principles of Personal Participation in Meetings

A. Be an active, responsible participant.

1. Effective meetings result when each participant takes personal responsibility.
 - a) Responsible participants take responsibility for the success of the meeting.
 - b) Responsible participants take responsibility for their assignments.
 - c) Responsible participants take responsibility for the decisions of the meeting.
2. Ineffective meetings result when team members are inactive.
 - a) Inactive participants keep their heads down when something needs to be done.
 - b) Inactive participants hope no one will notice them.
 - c) Inactive participants resist doing more or accepting responsibility.
 - d) Inactive participants are passive and indifferent.
 - e) Inactive participants are annoyed by extra work or time commitment.
3. Suggestions to be a more active, responsible participant
 - a) Actively participate in the decision-making process.
 - b) Be a good listener and ask for clarification whenever you are unsure.
 - c) Always treat colleagues with Christian respect and honor.
 - d) Help the group stick to the discussion at hand.
 - e) If you tend to talk too much, ask others to help you monitor this problem.
 - f) Maintain confidentiality; don't gossip about the group's deliberations.
 - g) State any frustrations to your colleagues during the meeting, not outside.
 - h) Do your assignments without procrastinating.
 - i) Make the extra effort to communicate well.
 - j) Be a problem solver, not a problem.

B. Be a faithful attender.

1. Faithful attendance is absolutely essential to productive meetings.
 - a) Absenteeism immobilizes a group.
 - b) Absenteeism affects group morale and performance.

2. Practical suggestions for minimizing the impact of absenteeism
 - a) Record meetings so those absent can hear the discussion.
 - b) Inform the facilitator of your absence beforehand. This shows respect for colleagues.
 - c) Discuss absenteeism if it becomes a problem.

C. Be a peacemaker and unity-builder.

1. God desires that his people be at peace with one another and display unity of mind.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Matt. 5:9 NASB)

- a) Achieving unity takes much prayer and wisdom.
- b) Achieving unity takes patience and humility.
- c) Achieving unity takes determination on the part of each elder.

2. Disunity among elders hinders effectiveness and can be destructive to the church.

- a) Disunity causes confusion among elders.
- b) Disunity disheartens the group morale.
- c) Disunity weakens the effectiveness of a group of elders.

Be of the same mind toward one another . . . (Rom. 12:16a)

. . . Live in peace with one another. (1 Thess. 5:13a)

Pursue peace with all men . . . (Heb. 12:14a)

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V. Principles of Personal Participation in Meetings (cont.)

D. Be a person of integrity, not a manipulator.

1. Headstrong elders feel justified in manipulating their fellow elders.
 - a) Manipulation demeans one's character.
 - b) Manipulation creates distrust among an elder board.
 - c) Manipulation ruins relationships and teaches others to manipulate.
 - d) Manipulation gives Satan a foothold and opens one up to further deceit.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Eph. 4:25 NASB)

2. Manipulative behavior is bad leadership for those conducting the King's business.
 - a) Spirit-led leaders do not hold back pertinent information in meetings.
 - b) Spirit-led leaders do not intimidate or threaten their colleagues.
 - c) Spirit-led leaders do not exaggerate or tell half-truths.
 - d) Spirit-led leaders do not deflect legitimate questions or block honest communication.
 - e) Spirit-led leaders do not misrepresent or misquote others.
 - f) Spirit-led leaders do not shift blame or slant the facts.
 - g) Spirit-led leaders do not plot or scheme, nor pout and withdraw from meetings.

So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands. (Ps. 78:72)

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight. (Prov. 12:22)

E. Be fair; refrain from making judgments without the facts.

1. Church leaders must never jump to conclusions before they have all the facts.
 - a) Use wisdom in dealing with rumors and accusations.

He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him. (Prov. 18:13)
 - b) Use wisdom in acquiring all the facts related to a problem, both pros and cons.
 - c) Use wisdom so as not to react immediately when we first hear of a problem.

- d) Use wisdom in doing your homework and getting all the facts before responding.
The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.
(Prov. 18:17)
- e) Use wisdom to be open-minded and willing to change.
The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel.
(Prov. 12:15)

F. Be trustworthy with confidential information.

- 1. Elders must understand the responsibility of confidentiality and privacy.
He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter. (Prov. 11:13)
 - a) An elder is in a position of trust.
 - b) An elder must be trusted with people's secret sins and heartaches.
 - c) An elder must protect people and their problems from exposure to gossip.
 - d) An elder must be a trustworthy servant with all confidential information.

G. Be self-controlled, not angry.

- 1. Elders must not allow uncontrolled passion and anger to rule a meeting.
 - a) Uncontrolled anger accentuates problems and clouds judgment.
 - b) Uncontrolled anger distorts reality and inflames emotions.
 - c) Uncontrolled anger deepens resentment and hinders peaceful problem-solving.
 - d) Uncontrolled anger provides the devil an opportunity to divide people.

For the overseer must be . . . not quick-tempered . . . not pugnacious . . . (Titus 1:7)

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Prov. 12:18)

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute. (Prov. 15:18a)

A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back. (Prov. 29:11a)
- 2. Elders must follow scriptural principles of conduct in meetings.
 - a) Spirit-controlled elders enjoy healthy group relationships.
 - b) Spirit-controlled elders provide Christ-like leadership for God's flock.
 - c) Spirit-controlled elders promote calmness and gentle talk.
 - d) Spirit-controlled elders promote healing words and wise speech.

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Prov. 12:18)

He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. (Prov. 14:29)

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Prov. 15:1)