

# Discussion Questions

## Lesson 1: Shared Leadership

1. For our study of pastoral eldership, [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) is foundational. Read that passage carefully and break it into its grammatical components (e.g., “For the Scripture says,”). Then explain briefly the meaning of each component (phrases, clauses, sentences). Finally, write out an expanded (and creative) paraphrase of both verses, demonstrating that you grasp their meaning.

**Example:** Just as the congregation must honor its destitute widows ([1 Tim. 5:3-16](#)), so too the church must honor its hard working elders. Those elders particularly who provide the congregation with effective leadership are rightly deserving and entitled to both honor and financial assistance. But above all, those elders who labor day and night at preaching and teaching the congregation warrant both respect and financial assistance for their tireless efforts. The Scripture itself backs up this principle: “Do not muzzle an ox when it is working hard at threshing the grain for food.” The Scripture also makes the same point this way: “A hard working man deserves his pay.”

2. Note the significant phrase, “For the Scripture says.” What is Paul’s purpose in including this statement in verses 17-18? What do the two scriptural quotations have to do with Paul’s teaching in [1 Timothy 5:17](#)?
3. List some of the characteristics of a person who “leads, with zeal” ([Rom. 12:8](#); ESV). (“leads, with diligence” [NASB]; “if it is to lead, do it diligently” [NIV])
4. How would you explain to a person who thinks that preaching and teaching is easy, stress-free work, that preaching and teaching is actually exhausting, laborious, hard work?
5. What must every member of a local congregation learn from [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) regarding their obligations to the church elders?
6. Explain why you think the speaker repeatedly emphasizes the fundamental importance of [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) to our study. Give as many reasons as you can.

## Lesson 2: Leaders Among Leaders

1. List the key biblical proofs that “first among equals” is a biblical concept. Which of these proofs most convinces you that “first among equals” is a thoroughly biblical concept? Explain.
2. List the many different ways each elder on the council of elders is different, and the ways in which each elder is the same.
3. In what ways do [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) and [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) relate to each other and help explain each other?

4. Why is [Ephesians 4:11-12](#) a core passage for helping the elders understand their work and their goals for the people they lead and teach?
5. The speaker warns of two erroneous, opposite views of biblical eldership. What are they? Describe what is wrong with each of these views.

### Lesson 3: Love Among the Elders

1. Make a thorough list of *all* the Christian virtues (Christlike attitudes, fruits of the Spirit, scriptural behaviors) that elders should display in their relationships to one another. See the speaker's detailed notes (detailed outline) for help to answer this question. Also, refer to pages 39-69 in [A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading with Love](#). This will be a long list, so be prepared. When you are done preparing your comprehensive list of Christian virtues and behaviors, explain how [Colossians 3:14](#) fits in the list.
2. We all know that we should act in love toward one another and speak to one another in love. It is our Lord's "new commandment" ([John 13:34-35](#)). Yet when disagreement and conflict arise, we suffer from amnesia and forget all that the New Testament says about loving behaviors. We revert to behaving in the flesh ([Gal. 5:20-21](#); [2 Cor. 12:20](#)). Give as many reasons as you can for why this is true of most of us. What practical steps can you take to remember at the moment that you are emotionally upset and angry at others to act according to all the biblical commands to love one another as Christ loved us?
3. Read and meditate on [Philippians 2:2-5](#). Use whatever study Bible, commentary, or online tools you have to make sure you understand this crucial passage of Scripture on relationships. Explain how the instructions given in [Philippians 2:2-5](#) set the *right tone* for the elders' personal relationships and the elders' corporate meetings together.
4. The speaker emphasizes the need for a church leader to have a "healthy soul," and thus to be a better leader and a model for others. According to the speaker, what are the characteristics of a "healthy soul" and an "unhealthy soul"?
5. Which of the eight negative aspects of love mentioned in [1 Corinthians 13:4-6](#) do you think church leaders struggle with the most?
6. Jealousy among church leaders is disturbingly prevalent and must be constantly resisted. Nathaniel Vincent's comments (in [Leading with Love](#), p. 48) are often true among the Lord's servants: *How much of hell is there in the temper of an envious man! The happiness of another is his misery, the good of another is his affliction. He looks upon the virtue of another with an evil eye, and is as sorry at the praise of another as if that praise were taken away from himself. Envy makes him a hater of his neighbor, and his own tormentor.* Identify areas, causes, and biblical solutions for brothers envying other brothers in the Lord's work. Use [Romans 12:15](#), [John 3:27](#), and [James 3:16-4:3](#) in your answer.
7. What do the following verses teach you about patience? [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#); [2 Corinthians 6:3-4, 6](#); [Galatians 5:22](#); [Ephesians 4:1-2](#); [2 Timothy 4:2](#)

### Lesson 4: Love Among the Elders (continued)

1. How do people like Diotrephes (and there are many) succeed in dominating and controlling the local church in an unhealthy way? What should elders do if one elder begins acting like a Diotrephes, especially if he is a highly gifted, outspoken, and prominent leader in the church?
2. The speaker spent quite a bit of time addressing the need to have the hard conversations that naturally arise in a fallen, broken world. He also warned of the dangers of avoiding conflict and addressing problem issues. As Spirit-filled, biblically oriented elders, what kind of working environment should be created that would allow elders to have those hard conversations without destroying one another or dividing the group?
3. The speaker gave many practical suggestions for building more loving, caring, trusting relationships among the elders. Which three ideas do you think would be most effective and doable? Explain. Of the practical suggestions the speaker gave, which one is most neglected by church leaders?
4. Why is it important for elders to move beyond simply having formal business-type relationships with each other? Explain your answer.
5. Why is “self-control,” which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit ([Gal. 5:23](#)), especially needed as elders discuss together difficult matters? List a number of reasons why this is so.

## Lesson 5: Accountability

1. What are the positive benefits and rewards of a formal accountability structure as provided by a pastoral eldership team? Explain how [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#) helps answer the above question.
2. The speaker warns against a common problem associated with shared leadership: “If everyone is in charge, no one is in charge.” What does this mean? This problem must be solved or the elder team will be ineffective in its pastoral leadership. What are some concrete ways to solve this problem?
3. Most people believe that leaders need accountability. But in practice, it rarely happens. Give reasons why genuine accountability among leaders is often more of a theory than a reality. What is the problem?
4. The speaker shared many practical ideas for effective group accountability. Which two of his ideas do you think all eldership teams *must* practice if they are to be truly effective in their pastoral care of the people? Explain your choices.
5. What is the reason that a church leader can still commit a catastrophic sin in spite of the church having a well-defined accountability structure in place? That is, why *doesn't* having accountability procedures always work? What lessons do you learn from this?
6. Discuss the principles of accountability taught by Paul in [2 Corinthians 8:16-21](#).
7. What are the characteristics of a pastoral eldership that has only minimal organizational discipline?

## Lesson 6: Communication

1. In this lesson, you have heard a presentation on the following passages of Scripture. Beside each passage, write down one or two commitments on how that passage of Scripture will help you to improve your communication skills as a church leader. [Proverbs 15:1](#), [Proverbs 16:21b](#), [Proverbs 25:15](#), [2 Corinthians 10:1a](#), [Ephesians 4:29](#), [Colossians 4:6a](#)
2. Write out your own creative, expanded paraphrase of [James 1:19-20](#).
3. The book of Proverbs addresses many subjects. But the most frequently addressed subject is speech. Why do you think the most frequently quoted Proverbs concern speech? Give as many reasons as you can.
4. Some elders are natural talkers. They like to talk, and at times they overtalk. But this doesn't mean they are effective communicators. What are some of the common problems high-powered talkers create for themselves and others, thus unknowingly blocking good communication?
5. Some elders talk too little. Speaking is hard for them. Praying for people and loving them are not enough. What are some of the common problems silent leaders create for themselves and others, thus unknowingly blocking good communication? List the obstacles that an elder who is silent needs to overcome to become an effective communicator.
6. Why is it necessary to be able to identify your own personal weaknesses in communication with your fellow elders and with the congregation?
7. Explain what [Proverbs 16:21b](#) means: "Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." Why would this proverb be immensely relevant to a leader of people?

## Lesson 7: Communication (continued)

1. Why do you think the speaker so strongly and passionately emphasizes the strategic importance of skillful communication by the church elders, on both a personal level and a corporate level? Don't just give one or two reasons; give as many reasons as you can.
2. Read [Acts 6:1-7](#). What do you learn from this passage about the apostles' communication with the congregation?
3. From [1 Chronicles 13:1-3](#), what can you learn about good leadership and skilled communication between a leader and those in his care?
4. "What is everyone's business is no one's business." Why is this principle especially applicable to a team of elders? How would acknowledging this principle regularly improve an eldership team's performance? Be specific.
5. Why should the elders be careful not to spring important decisions on people who have a vested interest in the decision? What could be some of the repercussions to the elders if they make unilateral decisions without the participation of others involved?
6. List some of the consequences a church faces when the church leaders do not get out in front of the rumor mill or a public church scandal involving sin.

7. Discuss one idea the speaker gave that will especially help you and your fellow elders to communicate with the congregation more effectively.

## Lesson 8: Self-Discipline

1. Why would God make self-control a requirement for a church leader ([Titus 1:8](#))? List as many reasons as you can.
2. Of the different verses the speaker presented on self-control, which two were most convicting or helpful to you personally, and why?
3. Two proverbs were presented in this lesson: [Proverbs 16:32](#) and [25:28](#). Specifically, what lessons do you learn from these two proverbs that will help you be a better shepherd leader of God's people?
4. Read [Galatians 5:22-23](#). A person without the Holy Spirit can be diligent, well-ordered, and disciplined in his or her use of time, food, and resources, but still be unregenerate. How does Spirit-empowered self-control look different from self-control in an unbeliever who might still practice all the habits of a highly effective person?
5. Paul envisions himself and Timothy as spiritual athletes. You too should see yourself as a spiritual athlete ([1 Tim. 4:7-8](#)), disciplining yourself to grow in godliness and effective ministry. If you take the athlete imagery seriously, how will it change your view of your own character and leadership ministry?
6. Think about different areas of your life where you need more self-control and self-discipline (for example, your home, your marriage, your health, etc). Write out a prayer that you can use regularly to ask your heavenly Father to help you to improve your self-discipline and self-control in these areas.
7. Why do you think the speaker emphasized strongly that a church leader cannot be a procrastinator? If you have a problem with procrastinating, what steps can you take now to help yourself?
8. When life gets especially busy or when your self-discipline falters, in what area(s) of life do you compromise first? For example, do you give up time reading your Bible? Time with your wife and children?

## Lesson 9: Self-Discipline (continued)

1. In the introduction, the speaker refers to elders as stewards of God's household ([Titus 1:7](#)). In the ancient world, the household steward or estate manager had a great deal of authority over household operations and those who served in the household. One commentator writes:

*This office normally included responsibility for overseeing a household budget, purchasing, accounts, resource allocation, collection of debts, and general running of the establishment, but only as instructed within guidelines agreed by the employer or the head of the house. (Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 336).*

To be a good steward of God's household, you need to be self-disciplined and organized. As God's steward, do you currently have a method for organizing your time and keeping track of responsibilities and tasks? Describe your plan to your mentoring colleagues. Learn from each other what each one is doing in this area. Is your system of organization effective? What can you change or implement in order to be more effective and efficient with your time?

If it is ineffective, or you don't already have a method, determine a new method you can implement.

2. The speaker discussed seizing small units of time wisely to get things done. What did he mean by that? Explain how you can now start implementing this principle in your life. How will you do this?
3. Following through (or a lack thereof) reveals much about your character and public reputation. List all the people you could potentially frustrate and disappoint if you as an elder do not follow through with an important assignment or task on time. Reflect on a time when you did not follow through on a task. How did this adversely affect your ministry?
4. Explain how disciplining your body can affect the discipline of your spiritual life and Christian ministry. Be specific. Give an example of how this principle works in your own life and experience.
5. Explain the advice of Henry David Thoreau: "Our life is frittered away by detail . . . simplify, simplify." How would you now apply this advice to your life to be a better shepherd of the Lord's people? What makes your life feel cluttered? What can you simplify in order to save you time and energy?
6. Is it possible to make an idol out of personal organization? Can an obsession with personal organization undermine other character areas that the Lord wants you to work on? What are the dangers of and cures for an unhealthy obsession with personal discipline?
7. This lesson has encouraged you to become personally organized and self-disciplined. But much of the Christian life and service, if done well, is highly inefficient.
  - People in your congregation will come to you with their problems and they don't want you looking at your watch as they pour out their griefs.
  - Many believers simply need time—weeks, months, or years—to work through matters of doctrine, morality, or general maturity.
  - Pushing a precipitous decision as a group of elders out of a need for efficiency can cause hurt and bring division.
  - Your own marriage and child-rearing, if done well, are likely highly inefficient in many ways, when your spouse or child needs time, attention, and understanding.

Some things cannot be rushed. Discuss among your mentoring group this tension you will face and develop biblical responses to it.