

“PAY ATTENTION  
TO YOURSELVES  
AND TO  
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**ACTS 20:28**

**Kingdom Ministry School  
Textbook**

A copy of this textbook is issued to each appointed elder, and he may retain it as long as he continues to serve as an elder in any congregation. At such time as he should cease to serve in that capacity, his copy of the book must be handed over to the Congregation Service Committee, since this publication is congregation property. No copies are to be made of any part of this publication.

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*“Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock”*

English (ks91-E)

Made in the United States of America

# Kingdom Ministry School Course

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# The Purpose of the Textbook

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The revised edition of *“Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock”* is presented as a practical and convenient handbook for congregation elders and traveling overseers to use in caring for responsibilities as shepherds of the flock of God.—Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.

As appointed elders and Christian overseers, you have been given the responsibility to ensure that the flock is well fed. (Compare John 21:15-17.) Among other things, this calls for teaching the congregation as a whole through instructive meetings. It also involves appropriate teaching on a personal basis to enlighten, give counsel, exhort, and reprove. Improving your ability as teachers is given special consideration in this publication.

Another important part of an overseer’s work involves taking the lead in field service. Therefore, emphasis is placed on your regular participation in the public ministry and on how you can help others to have a meaningful share.

With so many outside pressures bearing on the brothers, you are often faced with matters involving counsel and judgment. How can you be sure that you are viewing matters from Jehovah’s standpoint? When judging cases that come to your attention, how can you be balanced in showing loving concern for the brothers involved while making sure that Jehovah’s righteousness is upheld? This publication gives these matters careful consideration.

Material from the three original segments of *“Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock,”* published in 1977, 1979, and 1981, has been combined and updated. The outline presentation of the information has been retained. This facilitates locating particular points that you may need to find quickly. Thus the book will continue to serve as a handbook to be used in connection with elders’ meetings, judicial matters, and the periodically conducted Kingdom Ministry School.

The wide margins and other blank spaces and pages have been provided so that you can make appropriate notes for your personal use and can add references as related information is published or otherwise brought to your attention. If it should become necessary to make substantial revisions at a future date, the Society will issue revised information on individual pages that can be conveniently inserted, thus keeping the information in the book up-to-date.

We are confident that you greatly appreciate your privilege of serving Jehovah’s people as undershepherds of God’s flock. Your life is filled with many responsibilities; you are also subject to many pressures. On the other hand, you receive many blessings and much joy. May you find the information in this handbook to be helpful in caring for your assigned duties. And may your faithful service continue to bring refreshment and strength to the flock of God, your brothers.—Isa. 32:2.

# Imitate Jehovah, the Shepherd and Overseer of Our Souls

Jehovah is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. (1 Pet. 2:25) How it instills confidence and courage in us to have him rule over us! Since we are commanded to “become imitators of God,” we should imitate him in all areas of life. (Eph. 5:1) Consider the following four ways in which Jehovah, as the Supreme Overseer, sets the example for all overseers to imitate. (1) He is a God of love. (2) He is our Grand Instructor. (3) He is the Great Evangelizer, sponsoring the preaching of the good news worldwide. (4) He is the Perfect Judge, being just at all times and in all of his ways.

How can you imitate Jehovah? In your efforts to be like him, you must continually develop your skills as teachers. You need to take the lead in Kingdom preaching and disciple making. As judges, you must render just, yet merciful, decisions among Jehovah’s people. And in all matters, your exercising oversight in a loving way for the whole brotherhood is vital.

## Our Loving Overseer

**How many are the expressions of love that Jehovah has showered down on us!**

“We love, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Each day, we are indebted to him for the life and the measure of health we enjoy.

By Jehovah’s undeserved kindness, we have our family, brothers and sisters in the congregation, home, food, clothing, and innumerable other blessings.

We are obligated to him because he has given us the knowledge of the truth and the privilege of being members of his united international organization and servants in his royal service.

**Jehovah has been a Guardian and Protector of his people both physically and spiritually. (Ps. 145:20; Prov. 18:10)**

Elders should also be guardians and protectors of His people.

The basic idea inherent in the Greek word for overseer (*epi'skopos*) is protective care.

Elders strive to be alert to the needs of the individual publishers and families, willingly stepping forward to assist when there is a need. (Isa. 32:1, 2)

Stepfamilies, single parents, and widows may have special need for advice and guidance.

Teenagers or young adults who take a false step need help too. (Gal. 6:1)

Do not evade their problems.

Give them constant attention and guidance, being careful not to condemn them.

God gives us the direction we need in order to look after his people. (Compare Exodus 24:12.)

His Word directs us and his spirit assists us beyond our natural abilities in caring for responsibilities. (2 Cor. 4:7)

When we make mistakes or fail to handle situations adequately, Jehovah is patient with us.

**Many opportunities arise for you, as overseers, to imitate the Supreme Overseer in showing love for others.**

Watch for opportunities to help others, even physically.

How may love and patience be shown in the following situations?

A ministerial servant does not handle a matter to completion.

Someone comes to you seeking information but does not readily understand your explanation of the matter.



A young person shies away from you and other adults.

A young person whose parents are not in the truth begins to associate.

A single parent regularly seeks advice and encouragement. (*w*80 9/15 pp. 21-5)

A brother or a sister appears to be discouraged or suffers from depression. (*w*90 3/15 pp. 26-30)

A pioneer has car trouble.

An elderly widow needs help applying for social services.

A single parent or a widow has a leaking roof.

## **The Grand Instructor**

**Jehovah is the Grand Instructor of his people. (Job 36:22; Isa. 30:20, 21)**

**Jehovah instructed his only-begotten Son so well that he could be described as “a master worker” beside his Father. (Prov. 8:30)**

As a perfect reflection of his Father, God’s Son was a Master Teacher.

The Scriptures relate that those who heard him were “astounded at his way of teaching.” (Matt. 7:28)

It is noteworthy that Jesus himself said: “What I teach is not mine.” “I do nothing of my own initiative; but just as the Father taught me I speak these things.” (John 7:16; 8:28)

**Jehovah has lovingly provided divine instruction and guidance for man.**

He created man with the mental capacity to be taught and to teach others.

He gave Adam divine instruction in the way of everlasting life.

Through his prophets and priests, he continued to instruct his people, Israel.

The Levites, for example, were to be teachers of the Law.

Nehemiah described their activity on one occasion, saying that they were explaining the Law to the people, reading aloud from the book, putting meaning into it, and giving understanding in the reading. (Neh. 8:7, 8)

God provided teachers for the growth and health of the early Christian congregation. (Eph. 4:11-13)

Christian overseers today also need to teach God's Word.

**Today, Jehovah provides instruction by means of “the faithful steward.” (Luke 12:42)**

In loyal submission to Christ as Head and Master, “the faithful and discreet slave” is diligent in attending to the spiritual needs of Jehovah's people everywhere. (Matt. 24:45)

Appointed overseers serve as teachers in the congregation. (Titus 1:5, 9)

They must be careful not to give their own opinions but, rather, to teach God's Word exclusively. (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 4:2)

Five weekly congregation meetings, two larger assemblies within the circuit each year, and an annual district convention furnish progressive instruction and training in true worship for the entire household of God.

Gilead School, Ministerial Training School, Pioneer Service School, and Kingdom Ministry School give specialized education to equip ministers for particular fields of service.

Schools or training sessions organized periodically as the need arises equip brothers progressively to care for their assignments in the organization.

Help the brothers in your congregation to take full advantage of the schooling provided by our Grand Instructor.

Encourage enrollment in the Theocratic Ministry School.

Encourage those persons who qualify to reach out for the privilege of receiving specialized training provided through other schooling arranged by the organization.

In addition to handling parts on the meetings, you have opportunities to feed your brothers spiritually and in a loving manner before and after the meetings, in shepherding work, in field service, and in other ways.

How can love be shown when:

A brother is not prepared for his meeting part?

A shy or inexperienced person needs assistance in preparing talks for the Theocratic Ministry School?

Someone needs help in getting to the Kingdom Hall or to an assembly?

A child does not behave well in the Kingdom Hall?

## **The Great Evangelizer, Who Sponsors the Preaching of the Good News Worldwide**

**Jehovah provided good news of deliverance when uttering the first prophecy in Eden. (Gen. 3:15)**

Through His angel, He declared good news to Abraham. (Gal. 3:8)

It was foretold that the Messiah, Jesus, would “tell good news to the meek ones,” and he did that, sharing wholeheartedly in the work. (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18)

**Jesus foretold that during this time of the end, the good news (evangel) of the Kingdom would be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness.**

In fact, he said: “The good news *has* to be preached.” (Mark 13:10)

This is the good news that God wants people to hear.

Since overseers of the flock of God are responsible for taking the lead in this evangelizing work, individual self-examination in this regard is appropriate.

(2 Tim. 4:5)

There is need for you to be present and to participate in the field service when the rest of the congregation is sharing in this activity.

Elders need to make definite arrangements to take the lead in the field and work with the publishers and pioneers.

By such active involvement of the elders, the brothers are encouraged and the activity of the congregation increases.

Be alert to discern when publishers need help in developing their field service skills.

Give specific instruction.

Demonstrate how they can improve.

Make sure that the congregation has adequate arrangements for field service for the benefit and convenience of the publishers and pioneers. Good support will result.

By the example you set, the congregation should learn that field service is not a burdensome chore but, rather, can be a pleasurable privilege.

How can love be shown when:

A publisher forgets to turn in his field service report?

Someone stays too long on a call, causing others to wait?

An elderly publisher has become irregular in field service? (*w87* 6/1 pp. 10-12)

## **A Lover of Justice and a God of Mercy**

**Jehovah's justice and mercy became evident in the way he handled the case of the rebellion in Eden.**

Justice prevailed in the judgment he pronounced upon those two unrepentant rebels against his sovereignty.

Yet mercy tempered his judgment, as he foretold a deliverer for the then unborn offspring of Adam and Eve. (Gen. 3:15)

In justice Jehovah has allowed mankind to suffer the due recompense for sin. (Deut. 32:4, 5)

But in mercy he has made provision for their redemption and has given them hope of everlasting life.

**The ransom provision itself satisfies justice—a perfect life for a perfect life. (1 Tim. 2:6)**

Indeed, what mercy that provision reflects!

It is undeserved kindness to those in desperate need. (John 1:17; Eph. 1:7)

**Jehovah shows himself to be just and merciful with groups of people as well as with individuals.**

Jehovah extended to natural Israel the opportunity to supply the members of the bride of Christ.

But when an insufficient number responded, Jehovah mercifully extended the invitation to the Samaritans and then to the nations, the Gentile people. (Acts 8:14; 10:45; 15:14; Rom. 11:25)

David was worthy of death because of his sin with Bathsheba, but he was extended great mercy because of the Kingdom covenant, the mercy he himself showed to others, and his own sincere repentance.

However, he did not escape punishment: The son of his adultery died soon after birth, and David reaped repeated domestic difficulties.

**Elders must be both just and merciful in their dealings with others.**

In giving counsel and in judging, you should hold to God's standard with everyone.

What Jehovah expects of you is revealed at Deuteronomy 1:16, 17; Micah 6:8; and Matthew 5:7.

How may your love for impartiality, justice, and mercy be tested in situations involving the following?

Those you may consider more prominent in the Christian congregation and those you may not consider so. (Jas. 2:1-4)

Those of other races, nationalities, and economic levels.  
(Acts 10:34, 35)

Younger members of the congregation as well as adults.  
(1 Tim. 5:1, 2)

Wrongdoers who are sincerely repentant.  
(2 Cor. 2:5-8)

Members of your own family who have engaged in serious wrongdoing and are not repentant.  
(1 Cor. 5:11)

The example you set in displaying justice and mercy will be reflected by the congregation.

How may you imitate Jehovah, our Loving Overseer, when:

Someone who has been a victim of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse seeks your help? (*w*90 2/15 pp. 21-3; *w*83 10/1 pp. 27-31)

A person who has a disfellowshipped family member believes she is being avoided by others in the congregation? (*w*91 4/15 pp. 23-5; *w*83 1/1 pp. 30-1)

A teenager is going through a phase of immodest grooming and dress?

You are dealing with a wrongdoer who does not appear to appreciate your efforts to help him?



# Loving Overseers Working With the Congregation

As overseers work with the congregation, they should make it their goal always to imitate the loving ways of the Supreme Overseer, Jehovah. In the same manner as Jehovah has shown consideration for the disadvantaged and needy, so also overseers should be sensitive to the needs of the aged, the sick, the new ones, the young, and those who need material assistance. Even as our heavenly Father has shown interest in the spiritual growth and advancement of all of his intelligent creatures, so overseers today ought to demonstrate a constant interest in the spiritual well-being and advancement of all in the congregation. (Ps. 146:7-9) No doubt you would like to be of even greater assistance to your brothers in these matters.

## What Kind of Overseer Are You?

**Very likely you are a busy person, leading a full life with many responsibilities.**

If you are married, you have a wife and most likely children to care for spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Caring for this primary responsibility requires time and thought. (*w86* 11/1 p. 22)

Your secular employment can be very demanding of your energy, time, and emotions.

Other important matters involving Kingdom interests, such as personal study, preparation for meetings, field service, and helping and encouraging publishers in many ways, tax your time.

Maintenance and cleaning of the Kingdom Hall need to be scheduled and carried out, and at times your help may be needed when new Kingdom Halls are built.

You also need rest and relaxation.

Elders can learn to become proficient and to keep balance so that all necessary matters receive proper attention.



At 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, the apostle Paul mentioned some of the great pressures that he faced, and yet he said in verse 28 that from day to day, there was also rushing in on him “anxiety for all the congregations.”

You, as a loving overseer, feel a similar concern for all the brothers and sisters in your congregation.

**Paul wrote to Timothy: “I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who imparted power to me, because he considered me faithful by assigning me to a ministry.” (1 Tim. 1:12)**

Appreciation for the loving-kindness and mercy shown us by Jehovah and his Son, as well as our love for them and for our brothers, moves us to serve the congregation as fully as possible, despite other responsibilities.

Therefore, do not rely on your own wisdom and strength.

Always petition Jehovah for his wisdom to direct you in doing his work, especially when problems or circumstances arise that you have never experienced or handled before. (Jas. 1:5)

Pray for holy spirit. It can provide power beyond what is normal. (Luke 11:13; 2 Cor. 4:7, 8, 16)

The congregation prays that Jehovah will bless your efforts to serve him and his people as a loving overseer.

## **Working With Individuals Who Have Special Needs**

At 1 Peter 2:17, we are encouraged not only to “honor men of all sorts,” including secular rulers (vs. 13), but also to have “love for the whole association of brothers.”

By taking personal interest in your brothers and sisters, you stay awake to their needs and are in a position to show them appropriate love and honor.

All the flock of God need to feel the loving shepherding of the elders.

***The aged and the sickly often need special attention. (w87 6/1 pp. 10-12)***

These may need assistance in practical ways.

They may need someone to cook for them, wash and iron their clothes, clean their homes, run errands.

They often need encouragement and reassurance that the elders care about them and are interested in them. (1 Thess. 5:14)

They may need someone to help them get to the meetings, read to them, or in other ways help them to stay spiritually strong.

Consider ways that you can provide such practical assistance.

Other brothers and sisters can help you carry the load.

Invite them to volunteer.

Make definite arrangements as to how they can help.

It is important to check periodically to see that someone is following through on arrangements made to give assistance.

Your being alert to such needs and providing the appropriate assistance will mark you as a loving overseer.

You may be sure that this is well pleasing to Jehovah. (Heb. 13:1, 16)

### **Individuals with *medical problems* who are facing the blood issue need special assistance.**

Even before they enter the hospital, some may need help in making sure that medical and legal papers are fitting and that the necessary medical personnel have been spoken to in order to avoid a transfusion. (g91 3/8 pp. 3-8; km 11/90 pp. 3-6)

Visit the patient in the hospital.

Pray with, strengthen, and comfort the patient, also relatives, such as the parents of a sick child. (Jas. 5:13)

If the patient is faced with the blood issue, elders can do much to keep the situation calm and to reason with doctors and unbelieving relatives.

On rare occasions a situation requires a 24-hour watch.

The Hospital Liaison Committee should be called only when the patient needs a cooperative doctor, when a confrontation develops, or when a threat to force blood on the patient is unresolved.

All elders should have a copy of the list showing names and telephone numbers of committee members. Keep it in an accessible file with appropriate references, such as “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1990, pages 30-1, and March 1, 1989, pages 30-1; the brochure *How Can Blood Save Your Life?*; the booklet *Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Question of Blood*; and *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 1990, pages 3-6.

Committee members can help by:

Finding cooperative doctors, hospitals, and so forth.

Reasoning with physicians on alternatives to blood.

Discretion should be used in determining what, if any, assistance might be given on a humanitarian basis to those not having a good standing in the congregation.

For example, if a disfellowshipped one takes a firm stand on the blood issue, local elders or the Hospital Liaison Committee could share information with the family out of consideration for those faithful ones.

In major cities some elders are especially assigned as members of Patient Visitation Groups to visit hospitals regularly to assist Witness patients.

This arrangement does not relieve local elders of their responsibility to visit the sick at home and in the hospital.

### ***Newly associated ones are especially in need of attention.***

When they first come to the Kingdom Hall, new ones may feel like strangers; we want to change that feeling to one of warm friendship.

If you notice a new one standing by himself or talking only with the one who studies with him, take the initiative to approach and greet him and introduce him to others.

Teach attendants to greet new ones, and occasionally remind them to do this.

Train all the brothers and sisters to take the initiative in approaching new ones and getting acquainted with them.

So that you may encourage and help others, be sure to arrive at the meetings early and stay for a while after the program.

You can associate with new ones at other times also, perhaps visiting with them in their home or yours.

Such personal interest lets them see that genuine love exists among Jehovah's people. (John 13:35)

It also fills the void created when they cut off former associations and worldly entertainment.

***Young members of the congregation need to be strengthened to resist "the desires incidental to youth." (2 Tim. 2:22)***

Parents have the primary responsibility to care for the needs of their children. (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21)

However, the young ones are a part of the congregation, and elders have a responsibility toward them also and should show genuine interest in them.

Why is knowing the full names of all the youth in your congregation helpful?

Many youths do not have a father or a mother in the truth, and some have no relatives in the truth.

They deserve the consideration that is to be shown to "the fatherless boy." (Job 29:12; Jas. 1:27)

**EXPERIENCE:** One teenager was given attention by an elder. He would pick the boy up every time he was going to help with the building of the Kingdom Hall. Each day after they finished their work on the hall, they would go to get some refreshments and take time to converse. The boy grew up and became a circuit overseer. He remembered this elder's concern as a major factor in his spiritual development.

Take note of ways that you and others can assist and encourage young ones in the congregation, and continually assure them of your interest.

Seek them out to engage them in conversation at the Kingdom Hall and elsewhere.

Encourage them to express themselves.

Eagerly listen to their viewpoints and their problems; be slow to criticize, quick to commend.

Help young ones build confidence in Jehovah, and help them to esteem highly the privilege of being Jehovah's Witnesses. (*w85* 8/15 pp. 11-21)

Develop helpful interest in their schooling.

Show a keen concern for youth who have difficulty adjusting to adulthood.

Make them feel wanted and needed in the congregation.

Help them to see how they can be helpful and encouraging to others by their presence and participation at the meetings and in the field service.

Use ingenuity in devising assignments for exemplary ones, such as using them to assist with roving microphones, tidy up the restrooms after each meeting, and straighten up the chairs.

List some responsibilities appropriate to your congregation.

Suggest attainable goals for them, such as weekly participation in field service or commenting at every meeting.

Talk with them about pioneer work, Bethel and missionary service, auxiliary pioneering, and so forth.

Work with them in the field service.

Help them to make progress in various features of this activity, such as in filling out house-to-house record slips, organizing their book bags, and learning how to make return visits and start Bible studies.

Examine what is being done to encourage and assist young ones in your congregation.

### ***Pioneers need encouragement and help in many ways.***

Make a periodic check to see what encouragement pioneers need, and assist them in practical ways.

Are meetings for field service begun and ended on time?

Is sufficient territory available for the pioneers? Have they lost some of their joy? If so, why?

Arrange to work with them in field service on a regular basis.

If some have genuine material needs, others (including elders) may be able to assist.

**Assist persons who are *in need materially*.**

It is not enough just to wish them well. (Jas. 2:15-17; 1 John 3:16-18)

They may need advice or actual assistance in getting appropriate secular employment.

They may need advice and assistance in making application to receive aid provided by Caesar for the needy. (*w66* 2/1 pp. 95-6)

Children, grandchildren, or other family members who could help may need reminders or encouragement to do so. (1 Tim. 5:4, 8; *w87* 6/1 pp. 13-18)

There may be individuals in the congregation who would readily help if they knew there was a need.

If other assistance is not available, the needy person may qualify to receive assistance from the congregation. (1 Tim. 5:3-10; *w87* 6/1 pp. 8-13; *om* pp. 122-3)

**When there are *official restrictions* on the work, the brothers are in special need of encouragement and direction. (Isa. 32:1, 2)**

Arrangements need to be made so that all members of the congregation will be well fed spiritually on a regular basis.

Do not neglect encouraging the brothers to share regularly in the witnessing activity. (Rom. 10:10)

**In case of a *natural disaster*, arrange to provide comfort spiritually and to assist the brothers physically and materially. (*w73* 3/1 pp. 134-5; *w73* 2/1 pp. 95-6)**

Determine if any of the brothers were injured or lost their life and what care is being administered.

Check to see what government aid may be available. (*w66* 2/1 pp. 95-6)

Arrangements must be made for the brothers to be fed spiritually on a regular basis.

Following a natural disaster, the brothers can make good use of opportunities to comfort others spiritually and, to the extent possible, to help in practical ways according to the need.

When an *emergency* arises because of a natural disaster or political unrest, responsible elders should quickly contact the branch office by telephone.

The branch office will provide direction related to the establishment of a *relief committee* if needed.

Steps the relief committee should take include the following:

Follow through on the emergency measures initiated by local elders.

Quickly assess property damage and the needs of local publishers.

Establish headquarters, perhaps using a Kingdom Hall.

Collect and distribute needed funds, food, supplies, and building materials; coordinate assistance for those having needs.

*Do not solicit* funds by writing letters or verbally asking for assistance.

After relief has been administered, submit a detailed *written report* to the Society, including a written record showing all receipts and disbursements of relief funds.

**Brothers and sisters witnessing in *dangerous territory*, such as high-crime areas or war-torn zones (apply locally), also need loving assistance. (Matt. 10:16)**

The organization has suggested precautions that would be advisable for publishers who witness in dangerous areas. (*km* 4/85 p. 8)

Additional precautions may be appropriate for the brothers witnessing in your territory.

## **Your own *family* has special needs.**

Christian husbands have as their primary God-given responsibility the care and salvation of their families. (*w59* 9/15 pp. 548-54)

Occasionally, those in the congregation demand time and attention that an elder should rightfully give to his family. Shepherding begins at home. (*w83* 9/1 pp. 23-4; *w66* 5/1 pp. 271-2)

## **Aiding the brothers in these ways takes time and effort.**

Elders are understandably limited in what they can do.

Love for the whole association of brothers will prompt us to do what we can to help those in need. (2 Cor. 8:1-12)

## **Help Your Brothers to Make Progress**

Consider areas in which *you* should endeavor to make progress. (1 Tim. 4:12-15)

Set goals for yourself continually.

## **Help brothers who have the potential to become ministerial servants make progress in that direction.**

Brothers who are regular publishers and demonstrate a desire to be used can be given certain assignments to perform around the Kingdom Hall.

Before being appointed as an elder or a ministerial servant, a brother must be “tested as to fitness first.” (1 Tim. 3:10)

Your being alert to give qualified brothers something to do in the congregation will provide an opportunity for such testing and will give them added training.

Giving due consideration to their exemplary conduct, activity in the ministry, and fine spiritual outlook, the elders can determine what would be best for these brothers.

Keep in mind that not all have the same abilities or circumstances, so be discreet in assigning brothers things to do. (1 Cor. 12:4-7; *w68* 4/1 p. 209)

According to what is needed and appropriate, encourage reliability, industriousness, modesty, and humility. (Prov. 9:8b, 9)



In order for you to get better acquainted with these brothers, you may wish to visit with them occasionally in their home or have them come to yours.

Accompany them in the evangelizing work.

Help them to progress in the field ministry by application of *Kingdom Ministry* suggestions, and help them to find pleasure in sharing the good news with others.

Teach them to show interest in their brothers, taking others with them in field service as often as possible.

They may need to set a better example in encouraging their wife and children in this activity.

Be generous in giving commendation to these brothers when progress is made; it is a powerful force that often motivates persons to continue progressing. (1 Cor. 11:2)

If a brother is lacking certain qualifications needed by a ministerial servant, it would be a kindness to speak with him about the matter and give practical suggestions that might help him to develop the needed qualifications.

### **Train ministerial servants who are reaching out for the office of overseer.**

A brother may need experience in shepherding.

Provide training by taking him along on certain shepherding calls.

After a call you might ask him how he would have handled certain things that came up.

This may enable you to see how he reasons.

You may be able to help him improve his ability to exhort.

After he has expressed himself, you might explain to him why you handled the situation as you did.

A brother may need greater discernment in the practical application of Bible principles.

Suggest that he regularly read the Bible and certain past *Watchtower* articles and Society publications.

The body of elders may extend greater teaching privileges to capable ministerial servants who make fine advancement and meet the requirements.

From time to time, encouragement and counsel should be given to these brothers.

**Although our sisters will never be ministerial servants or elders, they need help to make progress also.**

Some may be encouraged to share in auxiliary or regular pioneer service.

Adequate field service arrangements should be made for the sisters when you are not able to be with them.

Consider other ways in which you can encourage and help your sisters, including single parents.

Urge sisters to become more effective in developing and conducting Bible studies.

**Periodically, elders should meet together to consider what can be done to help others advance.**

Since you have many responsibilities, look for occasions when you can combine one activity with another and thus accomplish both at the same time.

An example of this would be arranging to work in the field service with a publisher who needs spiritual encouragement.

Give other examples.

## **Joyful Results**

**Congregation members feel secure as they benefit from the concern, assistance, and protection of loving overseers working with them. (Compare Ezekiel 34:11-16.)**

**Servants of Jehovah are glad to cooperate and exert themselves vigorously in his work. (Rom. 12:11, 12)**

**Many are motivated to imitate the faith of loving overseers as they see how the overseers' conduct turns out. (Heb. 13:7)**

**Jehovah is honored by those who devotedly imitate him.**



# How Overseers Teach

Being teachers is a Scriptural requirement for overseers. (1 Tim. 3:2) The apostle Paul counsels: “Pay constant attention . . . to your teaching.” (1 Tim. 4:16) All of us should strive to be good teachers. We can learn much from Jesus, the Master Teacher, by observing how he taught. But remember, teaching is not a matter of mastering techniques. Effective teaching requires love, getting the spirit of things, motivating others, reaching the heart of those being taught.

## Learning How to Teach by Studying Jesus’ Example

The following observations show why Jesus was such an effective teacher:

His motive was to honor Jehovah. (John 8:49, 50)

He based his teaching on God’s Word. (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31, 32)

He presented matters with simplicity, brevity, and clarity, and he was practical. (Matt. 5-7)

He used questions to involve his hearers and help them to reason and draw conclusions. (Matt. 16:5-12; 22:42-45)

He used illustrations that applied to his listeners, such as those concerning fishermen, shepherds, and housewives. (Matt. 13:47-50; Luke 15:3-10)

He explained matters that were not understood by his hearers. (Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 4:10, 13-20, 34)

He used object lessons. (John 13:2-16)

He reached the heart of those to whom he spoke. (Luke 24:32)

The result of his ministry was that “the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching.” (Matt. 7:28; John 7:45, 46)

## **Improving Your Teaching Ability**

**Above all, adhere to God's Word in your teaching.  
(Titus 1:9)**

God's Word has power to move people to action.

God's Word is the truth. Our personal opinions may lose effectiveness as circumstances change or may even be in error.

**Avoid drawing attention to yourself.**

As God's humble servants, we should seek to honor him in all that we do and say.

Emphasize the Scriptures rather than your own ideas.

Jokes and humorous stories are not necessary and often detract from the power of the Scriptures. The Bible does not indicate that Jesus used such devices.

**Logical development is a key ingredient in effective teaching.**

It makes a presentation persuasive and easy to follow.

**Present specific material as Jesus did.**

A talk dealing with generalities lacks impact and authority; it is vague.

When giving instructions, explain how they are to be executed. Notice Jesus' specific instructions at Matthew 10:11-14.

**Do not introduce more material than can be adequately developed in the allotted time.**

Keep your presentation simple, uncomplicated.

Allow time to repeat the main points.

**Teaching with the Bible involves more than simply reading a Bible text.**

When reading, emphasize key portions of the text.

When giving a public talk, do not ask volunteers in the

audience to read Scripture texts; they may not emphasize the portion applicable to the argument.

Explain the scripture.

Illustrate the main point of the text.

Apply the points to your audience; this will help you to hold their attention and should move them to apply what they learn.

**Illustrations were an important feature of Jesus' teaching, and they can help you to be effective. (Luke 7: 41-43)**

Make your illustrations simple; complex ones may be difficult to follow and may even detract from your argument.

Note the simplicity and power of illustrations used by James. (Jas. 3:1-11)

What makes these illustrations so practical in giving counsel against gossip?

**Effective questions may be used to stimulate thinking and help individuals to draw conclusions.**

Note how Jesus used questions. (Matt. 16:13-16; Luke 10: 25-28, 36)

Asking leading questions based on what a person already knows may direct his mind to a correct conclusion. (Matt. 17:24-27)

**EXAMPLE:** A new brother tells you that his employer requires him to overcharge customers. He asks you what he should do. Rather than tell him what to do, help him reason on the matter and draw his own conclusion based on the Scriptures. Draw him out by asking questions, such as: How do you feel about it? Is such an action dishonest? If so, why? What does the Bible say about dishonesty? Would you want a person to do that to you? As you read and discuss appropriate scriptures with him, you will help him to draw the right conclusion based on the Bible, and he may be motivated by a good heart to follow through on the counsel of the Scriptures.

Asking a person what he thinks—viewpoint questions—helps you to find out what he believes on a matter.

Getting answers to such questions will help you to know what counsel or encouragement he needs.

His comments will help you to discern how to reach his heart.

EXAMPLE: If a sister asks you about marrying an unbeliever, you might ask her: What do you think about it? Do you remember any scriptures that have a bearing on the subject? After reading with her 1 Corinthians 7:39 and 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15, you might ask: What do those scriptures tell you as to God's view on the matter? Do you agree with this counsel? What benefits can you foresee coming to the person who follows this counsel from God?

## Appeal to the Heart in Your Teaching

**The figurative heart in man stands for the sum total of the interior man as manifested in all his various activities and in his desires, motivations, affections, emotions, thoughts, and so forth. (Ps. 119:11; *it-1* p. 1057)**

Heartfelt appreciation is necessary; for a person to apply the truth, it must first get into his heart.

When teaching, you must reach the heart of the student.

One way to reach his heart is to encourage the person to ponder on what he learns.

You can help him do this by emphasizing the main points and encouraging him to review these.

Another way is to ask probing questions, such as: How do you feel about this Bible point and what the Society has published on this subject? How could you apply this information in your life or to this present situation?

A third way to impress the truth on the heart is to help your listener to think in terms of his relationship with Jehovah.

Encourage him to ask such questions as: Why do I want to do this? Am I seeking to please God, or am I catering to my own fleshly desires?

Emphasize the importance of seeking Jehovah's direction before making decisions. (Ps. 55:22; Prov. 3:5, 6)

**A willing heart is necessary if our brothers are to be properly motivated to preach the good news. (Ex. 35:5, 21, 22)**

Do not try to get the brothers to engage in the field service by exerting undue pressure on them. However, encouragement is proper.

Endeavor to stimulate their hearts so there will be a desire to serve Jehovah whole-souled and to have as full a share as possible in the preaching work. (Mark 12:30)

Whole-souled devotion is implied in the greatest commandment of the Mosaic Law; no less is required of us as disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matt. 22:36-40)

Do not expect everyone to do or accomplish the same in witnessing.

People have different circumstances and different conditions of health.

All can render whole-souled service, some by producing thirtyfold, others sixtyfold or a hundredfold, according to their circumstances. (Matt. 13:23)

Help the brothers to appreciate that participation in proclaiming the good news is a sacred duty, a requirement on which our life depends. (Rom. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:16)

Keep before the brothers the fact that our work relates to the supreme issue of the rightness of Jehovah's sovereignty; this should stir our hearts and move us to zealous service. (Luke 6:45)



Help them to see that our sharing in Kingdom preaching and disciple making reveals that God's Kingdom really means much to us individually.

Show that lives are at stake, that we are doing a work never to be repeated, that the work is not in vain, that the reward for endurance in God's service is certain.

**Overseers who appreciate their privilege and discharge their responsibility to teach God's law will reap joyful blessings.**

'Pay constant attention to your teaching, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.'  
(1 Tim. 4:16)

What praise this will bring to Jehovah!



# Teaching at Congregation Meetings

The spirituality of the congregation depends greatly on the quality of teaching at the meetings. The five weekly meetings form an integral part of our theocratic education. The brothers come to these meetings expecting to be instructed in God's Word and encouraged in his work. You have a great and wonderful privilege to stand before your brothers, God's flock "in your care," to feed them and build them up. Do this willingly, with joy and earnestness. (1 Pet. 5:2) This will motivate them to zealous service and increase your happiness as well.

## Teaching at the *Watchtower* Study

*The Watchtower* is the principal means of dispensing spiritual food at the proper time.

The information it contains can greatly help individuals to establish and maintain a good relationship with Jehovah and with fellow worshipers.

The spiritual food is needed to nourish the heart.

**To teach effectively at the *Watchtower* Study, you will need to prepare prayerfully and carefully.**

Look up the scriptures and know how they apply.

Take a keen interest in the material and in your brothers; reach their heart.

Progressively strive to improve your teaching at the *Watchtower* Study.

**The opening remarks of the conductor should be brief and to the point, calling attention to the theme and stimulating interest in the material.**

Be warm, enthusiastic, inviting, and yet specific.

You may ask two or three questions that will be answered during the study, make a statement to be proved, present a problem that needs a solution, or focus attention on the teaching box.

***The conductor should not comment excessively.***

As a teacher, you do not do the thinking for the congregation; rather, by pointed questions you help them to think in an orderly manner and arrive at correct conclusions.

When important points are not covered in comments from the congregation or when the application of a scripture is overlooked, ask specific questions to draw out the information.

However, a caution: Do not ask additional questions unnecessarily, for doing so may stifle comments on other points that the audience has in mind.

Ask additional questions *only when needed*.

Avoid talking too much or leading the brothers to concentrate on details rather than on the main points.

Tactfully and kindly stimulate the brothers' desire to participate.

This may be done by being warm and friendly yourself and by commending the brothers for their comments and efforts.

Promote personal and family preparation.

**Encourage the brothers to comment in their own words, briefly and to the point.**

Train the audience to give a direct answer to the printed question first.

Additional comments by the audience may then draw attention to scripture application, to supporting arguments, or to practical application of the material.

The congregation should not be scolded if answers are not forthcoming as quickly as the conductor would like, for this may stifle future comments.

## **Make good use of the Bible during the study. (Acts 17:11)**

Help the congregation to appreciate that every study has been prepared to help us understand Bible prophecies, teachings, moral principles, and so forth.

Encourage the audience to look up and comment on the scriptures used in the study as time permits.

The conductor may invite all in attendance to look up selected scriptures as they are read and commented on.

Some scriptures could be assigned in advance for individuals to read and comment on.

Help the audience to understand how key scriptures support the theme of the study.

## **Keep concluding comments brief.**

Ask the review questions in the teaching box that appears toward the end of the lesson.

These draw attention to the main points.

Encourage application of the counsel in our lives. (Jas. 1: 22, 25)

## **Teaching at the Congregation Book Study**

### **In conducting the study, seek to build appreciation for the material being considered.**

Help those attending to understand not only the answers to the questions but also the *reasons* for the answers and the value of the information.

Make practical application to personal lives, attitudes, field service, and so forth.

Conduct the study in a way that will motivate the brothers to act on what they learn and will make them want to do Jehovah's will. (Ps. 110:3)

### **Your opening remarks should be brief and specific.**

If material is in verse-by-verse style, you may read the

portion of the Bible that will be considered during the study if time permits.

**Draw attention to the main points and overall concept rather than to details.**

If a comment made detracts from the theme, kindly direct the discussion back to the theme and main point.

EXAMPLE: If you are considering John 3:16 and the theme is the ransom, you would draw attention to the point that God “gave his only-begotten Son” as a ransom, rather than become involved in a discussion of the expression “the world,” although this is also mentioned in the verse.

**Unquoted scriptures may be read and discussed as time allows.**

The conductor decides how this is best handled.

Be selective, choosing texts that best illuminate main points.

Long citations may be read, they may be summarized by someone assigned in advance, or key verses may be read.

**Carefully observe the response of those in attendance.**

Do not comment excessively; rather, by pointed questions endeavor to draw out answers from the audience.

At times persons who tend to read their comments may be kindly encouraged privately to put them in their own words.

Be discerning; it might be offensive or discouraging if this is done after a new or timid person has made a comment.

Be alert to commend the brothers for what they do.

Strive to make the material reach both the mind and the heart.

To help the brothers understand points that are not clear, various types of questions may be employed.

You might use true-or-false statements as well as multiple-choice, leading, or viewpoint questions.

**Help the brothers to see the practical value of the material.**

Watch for points that the brothers can use in field service.

Are there points that would be helpful to those in divided households? Or information that could be used by the brothers at their place of employment, by the children at school, or by Christians in other situations?

**Encourage all to participate—young ones and new ones as well as mature ones.**

Keep the atmosphere respectful, yet friendly and inviting.

Perhaps you may be able to help some individuals prepare for the study.

Timid persons may be willing to read a scripture.

Others may be given assignments or may be kindly encouraged to comment.

**Keep the concluding review brief and specific, highlighting main points learned.**

If practical, have the closing review from the Bible rather than from the book, especially if the material was considered verse by verse.

**Continue to work at improving your teaching at the Congregation Book Study.**

## **Teaching at the Public Meeting**

The Public Meeting generally features a discourse, although slide presentations produced by the Society are also used.

All the elders, and especially the presiding overseer, should be concerned with maintaining high-quality public talks.

The presiding overseer will consult with other elders and

schedule talks that will be most beneficial for the congregation and for new ones that attend.

The information should be spiritually upbuilding to both new ones and regular attenders.

Request speakers from other congregations who are known for their effective teaching ability.

**Those who are assigned to give public talks should regularly work toward improving their teaching ability.**

Do thorough research in the Society's publications to bring the material to life.

Be sure that your outline is kept current.

Periodically update your statistics, experiences, illustrations, and so forth.

Points from recent articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* may be worked in when appropriate.

Apply the information to the needs of the congregation.

Visiting speakers who are not familiar with the particular needs of a congregation should be cautious in attempting to give pointed counsel to the audience on local situations.

When preparing a public talk, ask yourself: Why is this information needed? How will I present it and illustrate it so that all will benefit by understanding how the information can be used?

Present the information so that an unbeliever in the audience can see the reasonableness of it.

We want to help people, not ridicule them; we want to appeal to their reason and better judgment and not belittle their intelligence.

EXAMPLE: If your talk is on the subject of evolution, you would not want to present the material in such a way as to ridicule those who believe in evolution. While the brothers might consider such a presentation humorous, it would not appeal to a person in the audience who believes in evolution.



Help the brothers in the audience to see how they could present the material in a way that would appeal to those in the territory who believe in evolution.

Use terms that are easily understood by all.

Involve your audience by the use of rhetorical questions.

Make good use of key scriptures.

Not only read scriptures but also explain, illustrate, and apply them.

Do not read all cited scriptures; focus on key ones.

Rather than have persons in the audience read scriptures, the speaker should read them with proper emphasis, sense stress, and enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is very important in your teaching; without it, well-prepared material may not be clear.

Put your heart into your talk.

Adhere closely to the material and the timing set out in the Society's outlines.

Accept and appreciate constructive counsel offered by other elders who are interested in helping you to improve your speaking and teaching ability.

Elders should not hold back from kindly offering helpful counsel and suggestions to fellow elders when such is needed for improving the quality of public talks.

If it is decided by elders that a visiting speaker needs to improve, suggestions may be provided through the presiding overseer of his congregation.

Be sure that your aim is to teach the audience and not to entertain them.

## **Teaching at the Service Meeting**

**The purpose of the Service Meeting is to equip and stimulate the brothers to share fully in the preaching and disciple-making work.**

**Either the presiding overseer or another elder, after analyzing the material, assigns the various meeting parts to qualified brothers.**

Impartially using various qualified members of the congregation on the Service Meeting program stimulates interest.

**To teach effectively, prepare carefully and rehearse all demonstrations.**

Endeavor to follow the suggestions outlined in *Our Kingdom Ministry*.

These have been well thought out, and when adhered to, they will assure well-balanced and upbuilding programs.

When preparing to present material, consider the needs of the local congregation.

Help the brothers to see how the information presented is practical and how it can be helpful to them in their ministry.

Ask yourself: Why does our congregation need this information? What points will be of greatest value to the publishers? Then highlight these points.

For your instruction and counsel to be most effective, you should first of all appreciate the value of field service and set a good example in the work, taking the lead. (1 Tim. 4:12)

**The Service Meeting should be 45 minutes in length, excluding the songs and prayer.**

The brothers appreciate having the meetings conclude on time.

If someone before you on the program takes too much time, try to reduce your part to compensate.

If someone habitually goes overtime, the presiding overseer or another elder should speak to him in a kindly way, give practical suggestions, and help him to see the need to make adjustments.

Perhaps he should have less material.

Perhaps he should spend less time on introductory remarks and get right into the assigned material.

**Periodically the elders should discuss what they can do to improve the Service Meetings.**

**Each one should work at being a more effective teacher when he has a part on the Service Meeting.**

## **Teaching at the Theocratic Ministry School**

**The Theocratic Ministry School has done much to train God's people to present the Kingdom message in a clear and effective way by:**

Providing useful training for the field ministry.

Helping students progressively to improve their field presentations.

Training brothers to become effective public speakers and teachers. (*om* p. 73)

Progressive training offered by the school helps public speakers improve speaking and teaching ability.

**The Theocratic Ministry School overseer should prepare well to conduct an effective school.**

Use good judgment in making assignments, having in mind the student's age, educational level, time in the truth, and so forth.

Give good, constructive counsel.

As time permits, draw attention to practical points not covered by the students.

**Introductory remarks may call attention to points that the congregation can look forward to learning during the school.**

At times this can be effectively done by raising anticipatory questions and inviting the brothers to look for the answers.

**Oral counsel should encourage the student and further help him to develop speaking and teaching skills.**

Warmly commend the students for what they do.

Consider each student's emotional state and educational level.

If a main point is not covered by the assigned student, draw attention to it during the two minutes allotted for counsel.

Explain why a particular speech quality was good or why it needs improvement.

Give *specific counsel* on areas needing improvement, not necessarily in the order outlined on the Speech Counsel slip.

Explain or show how to improve.

If time permits, explain how a particular speech quality can improve the field service ability of the congregation.

When returning a student's Speech Counsel slip, it may be possible to encourage him and further discuss points of counsel; or this may be done at another time.

When someone needs additional help but you cannot give this yourself, arrange for another member of the congregation to do it.

**Some students may need help to improve their reading ability.**

It is important that everyone in the congregation be able to read well and understand what they read.

Arrangements might be made to help some improve their reading skills.

Perhaps an auxiliary room could be used for these classes when the school is being conducted, or they could be held at another time.

**All meetings should always be conducted in such a way as to honor Jehovah, spiritually build up those in**

**attendance, and cause us to grow ever stronger in our love for Jehovah, his service, and our brothers.**

All meetings should begin and end on time; this requires thorough preparation on the part of every participant.

Public speakers should adhere strictly to the 45-minute total timing indicated on the Society's outlines, excluding opening song and prayer.

One hour is allowed for the *Watchtower* Study, including the review but excluding songs and prayer.

When held in conjunction with the Public Meeting, both meetings are to be concluded within the allotted two hours.

The Theocratic Ministry School and the Service Meeting are allotted 45 minutes each.

When one of these two meetings follows the other, both should be concluded within one hour and 45 minutes, including songs and prayers.

On special occasions, such as during the visit of the circuit overseer, content and timing of meetings may be adjusted in accord with published instructions.

When elders and others participating in meetings prepare well and use only the time assigned for their respective parts, they show loving consideration for all those attending the meeting and respect for Jehovah's arrangement for meetings that encourage and instruct.



# Be Whole-Souled in the Evangelizing Work

Jehovah has assigned his people one of the most important tasks ever performed on the earth—the evangelizing work. Evangelizing involves preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom by means of every appropriate method open to us.

Why is the evangelizing work so important? Because it provides a touchstone by which mankind is being judged. Acceptance of the good news and obedience to it result in salvation; rejection and disobedience mean destruction. This in itself impresses upon us the urgency of the work.—Matt. 25:40, 45.

Especially must the elders be whole-souled in the evangelizing work. The apostle Paul stated: “Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.”—Col. 3:23.

## What Is Whole-Souled Service?

**Whole-souled service involves using your whole self—your heart, mind, and strength.**

Every fiber of your existence is involved in lovingly serving God; no function, capacity, or desire in life is excepted.

It means being God-oriented, that is, God-directed.

Whole-souled service does not require that we be physically perfect.

Imperfect people are urged to be whole-souled. (Mark 12:28, 30)

It is a matter of using all our imperfect faculties to the fullest extent possible in God’s service.

People have different abilities, so their accomplishments differ.

Jesus spoke of the seed “sown upon the fine soil” as producing a hundredfold or sixtyfold or thirtyfold—all is whole-souled. (Matt. 13:18, 23)

One person may have better health or more energy, resources, or natural ability than another; circumstances in life differ.

Two women in Bible times received honorable mention for their contributions to God’s service, though the material value of their gifts differed greatly. (Mark 14:3, 6-9; Luke 21:1-4)

Similarly today, some may be whole-souled even though personal circumstances and limitations allow them to do very little in field service.

Help your brothers to enjoy what they are able to do in the evangelizing work, whether it appears to be little or much.

### **Being whole-souled makes one more effective in the evangelizing work.**

If we put our whole heart into our presentation of the Kingdom message, people may sense this, and it may have much to do with their favorable response to the good news.

When in the field service, we should keep our mind on our ministry, how to present the good news effectively, and not on matters of self-interest.

As dedicated servants of Jehovah, we should be determined to exert ourselves physically, using our energies and strength in the evangelizing work. (1 Tim. 4:10)

An hour or two at a time may be all that an older or sickly person can wisely spend in field service. His service would be whole-souled.

Those whose strength and circumstances permit them to do more need not discontinue their activity just because others cannot stay out longer.

Honest self-examination can reveal to us whether we are in fact using our whole strength in the evangelizing work.



## Take the Lead in Evangelizing

Jesus set the pattern for Christian elders; Kingdom preaching was a major part of his earthly activity. (John 18:37)

Jesus was willing to extend himself in behalf of others even when he was tired. (Mark 6:30-34)

As “examples to the flock,” elders should take the lead in Kingdom preaching and disciple making. (1 Pet. 5:2, 3)

Your brothers are benefited when they see:

Your efforts to make room in your busy schedule to work hard in Kingdom preaching. (Eph. 5:15, 16; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13)

Your joy in the evangelizing work. (Ps. 145:7, 11, 12)

Your active and sincere concern for people in the territory.

Your interest in helping and encouraging your brothers as evangelizers. (Phil. 2:4)

Your enthusiasm in relating field service experiences and encouraging others to do so.

Your keeping the field service to the fore in the meetings.

Help those who are reaching out for privileges in the congregation to appreciate that overseers are to be examples to the flock in all respects, including having a full share in the field service according to their circumstances.

## Make Suitable Field Service Arrangements

**Good organization is needed to accomplish the most both in your personal field service and in the congregation’s field activity.**

Have a definite schedule for working in the field ministry.

This would include setting aside a specific time to share in the field service with your own family; make ap-

pointments to accompany other members of the congregation also.

When you work with others, do more than simply accompany them.

There is a need to teach them and help them to make progress in the field service.

Help your brothers to:

Use the Bible in witnessing.

Introduce subjects that have local appeal.

Converse with the people.

Show a genuine concern for the people.

Appeal to the heart of the householder.

Keep an effective house-to-house record.

Make return visits.

Start Bible studies.

Conduct instructive studies.

Remember that not all publishers have the same abilities. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

Commend the brothers for what they are able to do.

Help each one make progress in accord with his own abilities and circumstances.

Be loving and upbuilding in all that you do and say.

**The service overseer, with the cooperation of the Congregation Book Study conductor, should make sure that there is enough territory to keep the brothers busy during the time they will be in the service.**

Arrange for adequate territory for midweek as well as weekend groups.

Strive for a balanced coverage of the territory.

Be sure that the congregation has an adequate supply of the literature currently being used in the field.

## Encourage Pioneer Service

Elders should have a positive view of full-time service.

Mention benefits of the pioneer work in your talks, when appropriate; include pioneers in your congregation prayers.

**Be alert to the needs and problems of those already in the pioneer service.**

Elders are to provide personal assistance rather than have the pioneer write about problems to the branch office.

Your practical help and encouragement may be needed when the pioneer:

Does not have sufficient territory.

Is having difficulty meeting the hour requirement.

Needs someone to work with in the field service.

Is discouraged over the indifference of people in the territory.

Has become stagnant in effectively using his field service skills.

Needs assistance in starting studies.

Has financial problems.

May not be properly caring for his health.

Feels lonely and depressed.

Pay special attention to the particular needs of the pioneers in your congregation; be prepared to encourage them and to render loving assistance.

**One of the best ways to encourage pioneer service is for elders and members of their family to share in the pioneer work to the extent their circumstances allow.**

Elders who are regular pioneers are a great blessing to the congregation.

Some elders in the following situations have found it possible to be regular pioneers:

Those who are retired.

Those who have no dependent children.

Those who have secular work that does not consume much of their time.

Some have made adjustments in their secular employment so they can pioneer.

Some elders whose circumstances do not permit them to be regular pioneers have been able to engage in auxiliary pioneer service one or more times during the year.

Self-examination, more serious thought, and prayer can help each person determine if he can increase his personal field service time and still care for all his Scriptural responsibilities.

Many elders have encouraged and helped their wife and children to share in either regular or auxiliary pioneer work.

Cooperation among family members may help one or more in the family to pioneer.

They may need help to work out practical schedules, assistance in finding part-time secular work, encouragement to develop the godly view of wanting to help people through evangelizing.

Good results have come from making the pioneer service a matter of enthusiastic conversation in the household.

**Be alert to take advantage of all opportunities to preach and teach the good news.**

By word and example, motivate your brothers to be whole-souled in the evangelizing work, sharing as fully as they can in spreading the good news.



# Help Your Brothers to Reach All by Evangelizing

The Christian congregation serves Jehovah's purpose to have his excellencies declared abroad, by sharing the good news with all people who are willing to listen. (1 Pet. 2:9) As shepherds of the flock, overseers not only take the lead in evangelizing but also serve a vital role in encouraging and helping all members of the congregation to have a full and active share in the evangelizing work.

Jesus said, "The good news has to be preached." His disciples were told to be illuminators in the world by taking advantage of every opportunity to help others learn the truth concerning God's purposes.—Mark 13:10; Phil. 2:15.

Likewise today, you as overseers should motivate the brothers to vigorous action in the evangelizing work. Help them to maintain an appreciative and positive attitude toward the preaching work. Give helpful suggestions as to effective methods by which the work can be carried out, showing how people can be reached. Take the lead. Work with the brothers in the field. Help them to find pleasure in taking the good news to others.

## Proper Motive for the Evangelizing Work Is Important

**Help the brothers to see that love for Jehovah and for neighbor is demonstrated through the evangelizing work. (Mark 12:28-31)**

It is a privilege to engage in the work Jesus assigned.

Jesus demonstrated the proper attitude toward people. He served them in a self-sacrificing way. (Mark 6:31-34)

The apostle Paul's example is one to imitate. Doing so will result in the real joy that comes from giving. (Acts 20:24, 35)

Appreciation for the sanctity of life is reflected in one's attitude toward the evangelizing work. (Acts 20:26, 27)

**Brothers should feel a personal obligation toward those who listen. (1 Cor. 9:16)**

By often discussing James 1:2-4, 12 with the brothers, you will help them to remain active in the evangelizing work even when suffering persecution. (Acts 5:41, 42)

**Help the Brothers to Preach on Every Appropriate Occasion**

**When solid spiritual feeding has filled their hearts, the brothers will be stimulated to share the good news with others on every appropriate occasion.**

Knowing that there is Scriptural backing for engaging in the evangelizing work in a variety of ways instills confidence in the publishers to be flexible in taking advantage of opportunities to witness when:

Going from house to house. (Acts 5:42; 20:20)

Preaching publicly from city to city. (Matt. 9:35)

Witnessing in public places, such as in a marketplace or on public streets. (Prov. 1:20; Acts 17:17)

Speaking to people assembled in public meeting places. (Matt. 13:54; Acts 13:14-16)

Witnessing in informal settings. (Acts 16:13)

Approaching relatives or people who are traveling. (John 1:40, 41; Acts 8:27-30)

**Make the brothers aware of informal witnessing opportunities that exist in your locality.**

While visiting relatives or friends, in day-to-day contacts with neighbors, when talking with workmates or business associates, while traveling, when on vacation (holiday), and so forth, all of us have opportunities to evangelize on informal occasions.

Relate experiences that show how you get the conversation started.

When you set a fine example in taking advantage of such appropriate opportunities, others will be encouraged to share in this activity as well.

Our Christian conduct or acts of thoughtfulness may open the way for conversations with others. (Titus 2: 1-14)

Help the congregation to be prepared to witness informally and to anticipate opportunities to do so.

Highlight the need for tactfulness and discretion when doing so.

If the brothers are not taking the initiative to evangelize informally, take time on the Service Meeting to relate experiences or to demonstrate how to witness informally.

Some publishers may need to learn how to converse in a way that is not objectionable, so that the listener does not feel that he is being lectured. (Col. 4:6)

To be effective, publishers must discern not only how to begin but also when to stop speaking on a Scriptural subject.

It is often good to make a statement or two and then pause to see what response you get.

Notice how Jesus witnessed informally. (John 4: 7-26)

A few brief but appropriate statements from time to time may accomplish more than trying to say it all at once.

## **Stimulate Regular Participation in Prearranged Evangelizing Work**

The evangelizing work can be done in various formal ways, and often the elders can arrange for groups of publishers to share in these activities.

An effective method of reaching people with the good news is by calling on them from house to house.



Help family heads to make definite arrangements to share regularly in this work with their wife and children.

Teach them how this may be done so that it is a pleasant experience and an upbuilding activity for all in the family.

Other publishers also need the help and encouragement you can give by accompanying them in the house-to-house ministry.

By listening to your presentation, the publishers learn how to do the evangelizing work more effectively in the local territory.

When you are with other publishers as they speak at the doors, you will be able to recognize problems they may have.

Tactfully offer suggestions for improving their service.

Do not be critical of the brothers, and do not try to force them into a mold. Be upbuilding and helpful in what you say.

Recognize their limitations.

Reassure them of their worth as willing servants of Jehovah.

Train publishers to keep an accurate house-to-house record so they can call back on interested people.

Make arrangements for calling again where no one was at home.

Effort should be made to find someone to speak to at every home.

The best time for reaching people may vary in different parts of your territory.

Some publishers have had good results by witnessing in the late afternoon or the early evening.

With a little encouragement and assistance from the elders or other experienced ones, more publishers might be able to share in afternoon and evening witnessing.

**Give prompt attention to Expiring Subscription slips, return visit slips, and other notices you receive from the Society asking you to call on individuals in your territory.**

Arrange to approach subscribers soon so there is no break in their subscription if this is what they desire and they are benefiting from reading the magazines.

Offer to start a study with them if they are agreeable.

When the Society sends a notice for someone to call on a person who has requested literature or spiritual assistance, be sure to have a capable publisher call promptly.

**Elders should make definite arrangements for publishers to witness in public places in the following ways:**

Contacting people at their place of business.

Witnessing to people on public streets and at places where people shop.

Talking to people waiting in automobiles and at bus or train stops.

Visiting hospitals, rest homes, jails, and so forth.

Investigate other ways in which you may be able to reach people in your territory.

**Not all publishers feel confident in speaking to people in such public places.**

If the elders take the lead in this activity, other qualified publishers may follow suit.

Some publishers, on the other hand, may excel in some other form of evangelizing activity.

## **Other Ways You Can Help Your Brothers in the Evangelizing Work**

**You may be able to help some publishers by visiting them in their home and helping them to prepare the**

**current presentation for the ministry or some other Bible discussion for use in the field.**

Your visit may provide a fine opportunity for them to practice giving their presentations and for you to demonstrate the Scriptural discussions you are using.

**Accompany the publishers from house to house if at all possible.**

This is a most effective way to give personal assistance.

The publishers can listen to you and observe what you do, and by your suggestions, they can be helped to be more effective in the evangelizing work.

If you cannot personally accompany some publishers as often as you would like, make arrangements for other effective evangelizers to go with them.

Try to share with others in the midweek evangelizing work if you can arrange that from time to time.

This may prove to be very strengthening to sisters or others who cannot share in the field service on weekends, and it will give them a joyful sense of support.



# How the Elders Work Together as a Body

“In the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment,” states Proverbs 15:22. A congregation having a body of older men who work closely together is indeed blessed. But what is the key to their being able to work in unity? Primarily, it is their recognizing Jesus Christ as Head of the Christian congregation.

When elders meet together, Christ’s headship should dominate. (1 Cor. 11:3) Their meetings should be well arranged. (1 Cor. 14:40) They should try to reach decisions on matters discussed. Definite arrangements should be made for someone to follow through on the decisions that are made. How can the presiding overseer conduct meaningful elders’ meetings? What must each individual elder do to make a positive contribution to these meetings? But first, what is involved in recognizing Christ’s headship, and how does this unite a body of elders?

## Recognizing the Headship of Christ Unites the Body

**Although Jehovah God is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, he has appointed Jesus Christ as Head of the Christian congregation. (Eph. 1:22, 23; 1 Pet. 2:25)**

By genuinely accepting Jesus Christ as Head of the Christian congregation, elders will be motivated to do the following:

Let the Bible be the guide in making decisions. (John 7:16, 17)

Respect information and direction coming from agencies used by “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matt. 24:45-47)

Treat the congregation as God’s inheritance, not lording it over them. (1 Pet. 5:1-3)

Avoid imposing personal viewpoints, opinions, or arbitrary rules on the congregation or the body of elders.

Deal in a kind and loving manner regarding each individual in the congregation. (Matt. 11:28-30; John 21:15-17)

Listen carefully to the expressions of fellow elders. (Matt. 18:20; Rom. 12:10b)

Pray when a discussion among elders seems to falter.

(For additional information, see *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1986, pages 10-20.)

**Jesus Christ controls all bodies of elders. At Revelation 1:20 they are likened to seven stars upon his right hand. (re pp. 28-9)**

Jesus, by means of God's holy spirit, can influence *any* elder on the body to provide the Bible-based suggestions needed for any given situation. (Matt. 18:20; Acts 15:13-17)

By accepting this fact, elders will be helped to work together as a body.

Each elder should listen carefully to the Scriptural suggestions of the other elders.

We should not make an independent decision for the congregation if a matter is one on which we should consult other elders.

## **What Enables Elders to Display the Spirit of Cooperation**

**Jehovah, through his Son, unifies the congregation for harmonious cooperation. (Eph. 4:16; compare Romans 8:28.)**

Elders are really cooperating with Jehovah when they cooperate as a body for the good of the congregation. (Col. 2:19; 1 Cor. 12)

Cooperation is a result of displaying the fruitage of the spirit, which every elder should cultivate in his personal life, both publicly and privately. (Gal. 5:22, 23)

In the following ways, elders show that they are cooperating together and striving to maintain the unity referred to at Psalm 133:1:

Keeping communication among elders open and free, especially if there are differences in background.

Sharing pertinent information with fellow elders.

Not shielding elders or their relatives from needed counsel.

Seeking assistance and suggestions from elders who have much experience.

Not campaigning among fellow elders to undermine decisions of the body that do not meet personal preference.

Accepting fellow elders' excellent qualities, as well as their limited abilities.

Not finding fault with fellow elders as they are learning new duties.

Making sure that reports and records that other elders need to refer to are available and up-to-date.

Promptly following through to completion on assignments given by the body.

**It should be possible for bodies of elders to be *unanimous* in most of their decisions. (Acts 15:25)**

If *Bible principles* are involved, the elders should make their decision in harmony with these.

When there is counsel from the faithful and discreet slave on the matter, either by letter or from the Society's publications, the elders will want to take that counsel to heart. (Matt. 24:45)

Other matters may generally be decided by the majority of the elders on the basis of their sound judgment and of their concern for providing the best guidance and direction for the congregation.

Even the majority should not insist on a personal viewpoint if such does not take into consideration

Scriptural principles and the peace, unity, and spiritual welfare of all members of the congregation.

**At Romans 12:10, Paul exhorts: “In showing honor to one another take the lead.”**

If elders honor one another, they will not insist that their personal viewpoints be adopted when matters are discussed.

Individual elders will cooperate closely with what the *body of elders as a whole* determines is in the best interests of the congregation.

If the majority decide that a matter should be handled in a certain way, then the minority should give willing support to such a decision.

However, if those in the minority have a Bible reference and comments in print on the matter from the faithful and discreet slave, the majority should recognize such corrective information so that a Bible-based decision can be reached.

If in the opinion of the minority a Bible-based decision is still not reached, the minority should continue to cooperate with the rest of the body and bring the matter to the attention of the circuit overseer during his regular visit.

The congregation will cooperate if they sense that all the elders base their decisions on God’s Word. (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17)

## **Working Together as a Body of Elders**

**Working together as a body does not mean that all share in performing each task or making each decision.**

Individual members of the human body carry out certain functions without direct participation by other body members. (1 Cor. 12:12-31)

Honoring one another, elders will allow the presiding overseer and other assigned elders the initiative to make decisions that will enable them to carry out their respective responsibilities.



Consider the following examples of decisions that individual elders may make without always consulting with other elders.

Weekly announcements made to the congregation. Items posted on the information board. Service Meeting assignments. (presiding overseer)

Organization of congregation files. General letters of introduction and transfer of records when publishers move. (secretary)

Magazine order changes. (service overseer)

***Good communication and close cooperation are necessary among the elders themselves as well as in their relationship with the ministerial servants.***

Be ready to offer helpful suggestions and to listen to thoughtful recommendations.

**Genuinely honoring one another sets a fine example and serves as a good influence on the congregation.**

It promotes peace and encourages all to work with greater enthusiasm and happiness.

Discouragement will be diminished. (Prov. 24:10)

## **When Elders' Meetings May Be Held**

**Meetings are held each year in conjunction with visits of the circuit overseer.**

**Three months after each visit of the circuit overseer, a meeting can be scheduled. (*om* p. 42)**

**Other meetings should be arranged at any time that circumstances necessitate.**

Keep additional meetings limited to their purposed objectives.

If elders do not become bogged down with unnecessary meetings, they will have more time for their family, for field service activities, and for shepherding the congregation. (Matt. 24:14; 1 Tim. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:2)

## How the Presiding Overseer Can Prepare for Elders' Meetings

Romans 12:8 says, "He that presides, let him do it in real earnest."

The presiding overseer *compiles an agenda* of matters that need discussion by the whole body of elders.

He contacts the other elders individually beforehand to determine what matters they feel need to be added to the agenda and discussed.

If practical, in harmony with Proverbs 21:5, he gives a copy of the agenda to each elder far enough in advance of the meeting to allow him to give the points due thought. (1 Cor. 14:40)

In some cases the elder who recommended an item for the agenda may be asked to take the lead in presenting it for discussion.

Letting the brother know ahead of time will give him opportunity to prepare a clear presentation of the facts.

Diligent preparation will keep the length of elders' meetings to a minimum, allowing more time for other essentials.

## How You Can Prepare for Elders' Meetings

When you receive the agenda prepared by the presiding overseer, you should give careful and prayerful thought to each point itemized.

Listed below are some questions that each elder may want to ponder in connection with major items on the agenda:

How did this situation come about?

What Scriptural principles should guide us in deciding what to do?

What direction has been provided by the faithful and discreet slave?

There is need to do research in the Society's publications. (Where available, use the *Watch Tower Publications Indexes*.)

Is there more that I can do to deal effectively with this matter?

In what way can the entire body of elders improve its handling of this matter?

Should this suggestion be put into operation? Why?

## **What Matters Might Be Included on the Agenda for Elders' Meetings**

**Spiritual matters should be of principal concern. (Phil. 1:9-11)**

Appropriate ideas can be obtained by thinking on the shepherding counsel found in the letters to Timothy and Titus and in such passages as Acts 20:17-35 and 1 Peter 5:1-11.

**Time may be allowed on the agenda for matters of a mechanical, nonspiritual nature also.**

These should be discussed only when they involve problems that an individual elder, the building committee, or the maintenance committee cannot care for on their own initiative.

## **Make Meaningful Expressions During Your Elders' Meetings**

**The presiding overseer should set the pace of the discussion by keeping the main points to the fore; keep to the agenda.**

Conclude each matter before another is opened for discussion so that the meeting does not bog down or ramble.

Make sure that either you or another elder takes notes as to decisions made and who will carry them out.

**Applying the Scriptural principles embodied in the following will result in more productive elders' meetings:**

Speak on the points under discussion only when you have something meaningful to add. (Prov. 10:19)

There should be no wrath or debates evident in elders' meetings. (1 Tim. 2:8)

Speak up, use "freeness of speech." Much time can be wasted if there are long pauses due to a hesitancy to speak. (1 Tim. 3:13)

**See the listing at the end of this unit. In it are some items that you may wish to include on an agenda for consideration by the elders in your congregation.**

(For more information, see *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1988, pages 15-20, and August 1, 1975, pages 471-4.)

## **Presiding Overseer**

The presiding overseer is appointed by the Society for an indefinite period of time. He serves as chairman of the body of elders. He should be a kindly, loyal man with experience in handling congregation matters. He must be orderly and diligent, not a procrastinator in caring for responsibilities. (1 Tim. 3:2)

**His duties include the following:**

Serves as chairman of the body of elders at their meetings.

Receives congregation mail and passes it along to the secretary for circulation and filing.

Signs most correspondence sent to the Society.

Compiles Scriptural and practical agendas outlining points for discussion at regular elders' meetings throughout the year. May suggest points for elders' meetings during the visit of the circuit overseer.

Seeks to distinguish between items that can be handled by individual elders and those needing attention by the

entire body of elders, so as to avoid unnecessarily taking the time of the entire body.

Makes sure that there is appropriate follow-through on decisions made by elders.

Modestly seeks and accepts suggestions from other elders.

Arranges for monthly Service Meeting schedule, and makes sure of appropriate rehearsals of demonstrations, interviews, and so forth.

May ask other elders to assist.

Arranges for public talks.

Might be assisted by another elder or a well-qualified ministerial servant, if needed.

Approves all announcements made to the congregation, especially those of a judicial nature.

Takes the lead in caring for details in preparation for the circuit overseer's visit.

Serves as chairman of the service committee when considering regular or auxiliary pioneer applications, unassigned territory applications, or similar matters as required by the Society.

Calls a meeting of the body of elders when judicial matters arise. (See Unit 5 (b), pages 108-10.)

Arranges for two elders to meet with each person desiring to become a new publisher. The publisher conducting the study is included in the meeting. (*w*88 11/15 p. 17)

Arranges for elders to consider questions with baptismal candidates.

Arranges for quarterly audit of congregation accounts.

Makes certain there is a written record of such and that an appropriate announcement regarding the audit is made to the congregation.

Authorizes payment of all normal operating expenses of the congregation.

**Recommendation for appointment of the presiding overseer is submitted in conjunction with the regular visit of the circuit overseer.**

If a temporary adjustment is made apart from the circuit overseer's visit, the Society should be notified immediately by letter signed by the service committee on behalf of the body of elders.

The Presiding Overseer Change of Address form (S-29) should accompany the letter.

## **Congregation Secretary**

**Sees to it that correspondence received by the congregation and the body of elders from the Society and others is attended to promptly and proper response is made when necessary.**

**The secretary's duties include the following:**

Maintains the vital congregation records in an orderly way.

Circulates among the elders all letters from the Society and traveling overseers and then files them for reference.

Keeps records concerning Kingdom Hall ownership, legal corporation, loans, insurance, deeds, and other documents.

Files records on disciplinary cases, including reports made up by the judicial committees. (See Unit 5 (c), page 122.)

Keeps a diary of business items that elders or congregation must handle in the future, such as utility bills and tax and government items.

Sends orders to the branch office; sends reports promptly; sends communications prepared by other brothers.

Keeps Congregation's Publisher Record cards; compiles field service reports.

Gives report to Congregation Book Study conductors as to who is irregular in field service.

Sends Congregation's Publisher Record card to congregation to which a publisher moves or initiates correspondence if a publisher moves into his congregation. (*km* 2/91 p. 7)

Secretary will personally care for these duties.

If necessary, an elder or a capable ministerial servant may be assigned to assist in caring for some routine matters.

## Service Overseer

**As evangelizer and teacher, the service overseer is keenly interested in his fellow servants. He is one who loves the field ministry and is capable and alert to train others. He is respected in the congregation as one who takes the lead in the field and who has demonstrated his effectiveness in various aspects of the field ministry.**

**The service overseer's duties include the following:**

Schedules regular visits to all Congregation Book Study groups, so that once each month he visits a different group. (In smaller congregations with perhaps only one or two book studies, he may arrange to visit each one twice during the year.)

Following a 45-minute book study, he will give a 15-minute service talk.

On that weekend he will work with the group in the field ministry from house to house and help publishers with their return visits and Bible studies.

Other weeks of the month are spent with the group where he is assigned along with his family. (*km* 6/90 p. 7)

Takes the lead in arranging meetings for field service at convenient times during weekdays; he is alert to organize witnessing on holidays.

Shows genuine interest in Bible Study activity, making sure that effective studies are being conducted and that students are being directed to the organization.

Takes keen interest in irregular and inactive publishers living in the congregation territory and works along with the body of elders in providing spiritual assistance toward recovery. (*km* 4/82 p. 3)

Directly oversees the work of ministerial servants assigned to handle literature, magazines, and territory.

## **Congregation Service Committee**

Comprises the presiding overseer, the secretary, and the service overseer. (*om* p. 43)

The duties of the Congregation Service Committee involve the following:

Signing correspondence regarding appointment or deletion of elders, ministerial servants, and pioneers.

They process applications for auxiliary and regular pioneer work, for Bethel service, and for other special service privileges.

If one member is absent, another elder may be asked to substitute in order to expedite matters.

May be called on by the Society for other designated work as needed.

One member of the service committee is included in the meeting with each Bible student desirous of becoming an unbaptized publisher. (*w88* 11/15 p. 17)

## **The *Watchtower* Study Conductor and the Theocratic Ministry School Overseer**

The *Watchtower* Study conductor and the Theocratic Ministry School overseer conduct their respective meetings in harmony with counsel from the organization as outlined in *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry, Our Kingdom Ministry*, other special instructions, and this textbook.

It is important that these brothers prepare diligently and use effective teaching methods, since these meetings are primary provisions of the faithful slave to give vital instruction to the congregation.



The *Watchtower* Study conductor and the Theocratic Ministry School overseer should set an outstanding example as zealous ministers of the good news, working regularly with the publishers in the field service.

In the absence of either of these brothers, a qualified elder may be asked to conduct the meeting.

## Circuit Overseer's Visit

**The schedule of the circuit overseer has been arranged to be beneficial to the congregation. There may be a need to adjust this schedule when several congregations use the same Kingdom Hall or when other local circumstances would make an adjustment advisable.**

*Tuesday* evening at the Kingdom Hall.

The Theocratic Ministry School will be 30 minutes in length, followed by a Service Meeting of 30 minutes.

The circuit overseer will then present a 30-minute closing service talk.

*Thursday* (or Friday) evening at the Kingdom Hall.

One combined Congregation Book Study.

A designated elder will conduct the study and endeavor to cover the assigned portion for that week in 45 minutes.

This will be followed by "Continue in the Things That You Learned," a 30-minute feature with audience participation, conducted by the circuit overseer.

The circuit overseer will then give a concluding 30-minute service talk. (*km* 5/90 p. 2)

*Sunday* at the Kingdom Hall.

The circuit overseer will give the public talk, usually 45 minutes in length.

This will be followed by a 30-minute *Watchtower* Study, without the reading of paragraphs.

Finally, the circuit overseer will present his concluding remarks for 30 minutes.

**Elders should exhibit an enthusiastic spirit before and during the circuit overseer's visit.**

Elders should allow the circuit overseer's visit to infuse them with renewed vigor to carry out their responsibilities and should help stimulate the congregation to greater activity and faithfulness.

## **Suggestions for Agendas Used for Elders' Meetings**

**Overall spirit of the congregation.**

Is love manifest by warmth among the brothers?

Is there a joyful spirit?

Are hospitality and friendliness being exhibited?

Do the friends get together for mutual encouragement at times other than at meetings?

Is there freedom from class distinctions?

Do the teenagers and young adults feel accepted?

Do the elderly display cheerfulness because of receiving kindly attention?

Are the elders helpful in cases of need?

Do the publishers show a readiness to help one another in cases of illness or accident, or under other circumstances?

Are the brothers taking the truth seriously as a way of life?

Is there a healthy pioneer spirit?

Do the publishers show a spirit of willingness to work together in field service?

**Being well acquainted with the flock.**

What individuals or families need encouragement?

Have there been any deaths in the families of publishers?

Who are the new ones, and how are they progressing?

Is due consideration being given to the sick, the handicapped, those with unbelieving mates, the single parents, the widows and orphans, the youths?

Who is in the hospital, in a nursing home, sick in bed?  
Is there need for more home visitation?

### **Congregation meetings.**

How can we make more local and personal application?

What public talks will be most beneficial for the congregation?

How can we provide a variety of speakers?

Are presentations from the platform warm and encouraging?

Do we use a variety of qualified publishers for presentations?

Do presentations show good balance and understanding of the brothers' circumstances and difficulties?

Are the brothers mechanical in giving their answers?

Can the adolescents and young adults be helped to participate more fully?

How can we assist those confined to their homes or to nursing homes to have a share in the meetings?

Are there transportation needs?

Are more book study groups needed? Should they be rearranged? Who should conduct?

### **Witnessing and teaching work in the field.**

Are there practical arrangements for field service during the week and on the weekends, in the evenings, on holidays?

Are elders balancing shepherding work with field service?

Are the elders setting a good example in the field ministry? (Heb. 13:7)

Are there arrangements for street witnessing and for working business territory?

What help is being given to new ones?

Are timid ones receiving assistance with their presentations in the ministry?

Do publishers simply cover territory, or are they finding interested ones and following through to help them?

Are Bible students attending meetings?

### **Auxiliary and regular pioneer activity.**

How can we encourage more publishers to share?

Which pioneers can assist other publishers now?

What specific encouragement are we giving the pioneers?

What problems are the pioneers experiencing, and what help is needed?

When have we last accompanied the pioneers in house-to-house work and on their Bible studies?

### **How well are the people in the territory being reached?**

Are the publishers resourceful, also taking advantage of opportunities to witness informally?

Do the publishers and pioneers show personal interest in the householders?

How thoroughly is the territory being covered?

Is territory coverage balanced?

Are there foreign-language groups that need attention?

Are diversified approaches being used in ethnic neighborhoods?

### **Moral cleanness.**

What is the level of morality, virtuous conduct, in the congregation?

Are there matters about which a selected judicial committee needs to inform the whole body of elders for the protection of the congregation?

Of course, confidential matters should be kept undisclosed, confidential.

What can elders do to promote sound adherence to good ethics, morals?

Are there trends toward worldliness?

What can be done to counter such trends or prevent their development?

### **Aiding other males to qualify for service responsibilities.**

What brothers display a positive spirit and willingness to be used?

Who need help, and how can we give it?

How can we encourage the ministerial servants to care for more responsibilities?

Who needs additional training?

### **Articles in *The Watchtower* or other publications.**

When special needs arise, the body of elders can review articles that are appropriate, such as those dealing with mercy, reproof, government restrictions, child abuse, wife beating, mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, apostasy, working together in field service, and cooperating together as a congregation.

**Matters of a less spiritual nature. (To be considered only when there is a problem that cannot be handled by an elder or by the committee already assigned the responsibility.)**

Better care and protection of Kingdom Hall property.

Prompt completion of Kingdom Hall construction or remodeling.

Better attention to certain congregation records. Caring for certain financial obligations.

**When elders work together harmoniously as a body, adhering closely to Bible principles and theocratic counsel, the congregation enjoys great benefits and Jehovah's name is honored.**



# Our Loving Heavenly Overseer Provides Counsel and Discipline for All

The overseers in the congregation are responsible for shepherding the flock of God. This involves giving counsel and administering discipline from Jehovah in a loving manner. At the same time, the overseers themselves must be subject to Jehovah's loving oversight, accepting and applying his counsel and discipline in their own lives. To the overseers as well as to all other members of the congregation, Jehovah says: "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, in order that you may become wise in your future."—Prov. 19:20.

## The Meaning and Benefits of Discipline and Counsel

The Greek word for discipline (*pai-dei'a*) has the basic meaning of instruction, education, a course of training, chastisement. (Acts 7:22; 22:3)

It includes the thought of there being restrictions or corrective measures available to cause the disciple to adhere to the course being taught.

The word primarily relates to what is needed in bringing up and training children.

**Counsel or advice often includes commendation and corrective suggestions and is linked with discipline at Proverbs 19:20.**

**Discipline from Jehovah is a proof of his love; when accepted and applied, it leads to everlasting life. (Heb. 12:5-9)**

God disciplines his sons, even "scourges" them, which indicates severity, allowing them to undergo difficult trials.

Suffering is of value if it corrects a wrong or if it trains us in righteousness. (Ps. 119:71)

Suffering also provides refinement, as in the case of Jesus' benefiting from suffering as a man. (Heb. 5: 8-10)

## Means by Which Counsel Is Given

### Jehovah gives us much counsel through his written Word, the Bible.

He instructs his people collectively, giving them practical counsel on worship. (Heb. 10:25)

This counsel helps them to maintain a good relationship with him.

The Bible also gives counsel regarding personal conduct, which helps us individually to have a clean moral standing. (Eph. 4:17-28)

Counsel is also received through study and meditation, which enable us to discern the application of principles. (1 Tim. 4:15)

### “The faithful and discreet slave” is used by Jehovah to give us good counsel. (Matt. 24:45)

This slave class not only helps us to understand the meaning of Scripture texts but also gives us valuable counsel and suggestions, indicating how to apply Bible principles so as to remain spiritually strong.

Counsel from the faithful slave comes to us through Bible-based literature published by the Watch Tower Society and through congregation meetings.

Helpful counsel is given on the proper mental attitude toward our field ministry, spiritual advancement, personal study, cooperating with our brothers, and many other aspects of our sacred service.

EXAMPLES: (1) Five meetings are outlined for us each week, and we are encouraged to attend these.  
(2) Orderly arrangements are made for a local body of elders to instruct and counsel the congregation



and to minister to their needs. (3) *Our Kingdom Ministry* suggests ways of presenting the good news to others.

**Appointed older men in the congregation must shoulder the responsibility of giving counsel when needed.**

This is an obligation that comes with their appointment as elders. (Titus 1:9)

**In the family arrangement, husbands and fathers have the responsibility to counsel their wife and children; mothers share in counseling the children. (Eph. 5: 22, 23; 6:1, 4)**

**In our private lives, self-discipline is very necessary.**

Consider Bible principles that would help you to discipline yourself with regard to the following:

Work habits relating to both spiritual and secular matters. (1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 3:23)

Time management. (Prov. 26:14; 1 Cor. 7:29; Eph. 5:16)

Keeping agreements. (Eccl. 5:4-6; Matt. 5:37)

Recreation and entertainment. (Eccl. 3:1; 1 Cor. 10:31, 32; 1 Tim. 4:8)

Sexual behavior. (Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 7:1, 2; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2)

Unbecoming habits. (1 Cor. 13:5; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 2:2)

Associates. (1 Cor. 5:11; 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-18)

Manners. (Lev. 19:32; Matt. 7:12; 1 Cor. 10:31)

Materialistic desires. (Prov. 16:16; Zeph. 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:10)

Personal grooming and dress. (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4; 5:3)

Speech. (Eph. 4:29-5:5; Col. 4:6)

## Giving Appropriate and Effective Counsel

Elders are required to give counsel to individuals who are seeking it, or they may have to search out ones needing counsel.

The effectiveness of counsel given can be determined by the results it produces; however, good and accurate counsel will not produce results unless it is offered in the correct manner and then is accepted and applied by the one to whom it is directed. (*w77 12/1 pp. 720-4*)

Counsel may be in the form of commendation.

If a brother is commended for the fine emphasis he uses when reading scriptures in his talk, he will probably give special attention to doing the same or even strive to improve in his manner of reading scriptures in future talks.

Counsel may point out something to work on, or it may offer specific recommendations or suggest remedies for errors being made.

**Care should be exercised not to get involved in handling matters that are Scripturally the prerogative of someone else.**

On personal matters individuals should make their own decisions based on a Bible-trained conscience, but they may ask elders for Scriptural guidance. (Rom. 14:1-23; Phil. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:16)

Married couples themselves should settle their differences, but they may request counsel from elders.

Parents should take the responsibility for their minor children, but they may seek help from elders.

**Brothers having personal disputes may request that elders help them settle their differences.**

Elders may first encourage them to apply Matthew 5:23, 24 or 18:15, 16.

Elders should listen carefully to both sides and then offer appropriate Scriptural counsel. (Prov. 18:13, 17)

Individual elders should not take it upon themselves to handle matters that ought to be judged by an assigned judicial committee or decided by the body of elders.

## Manner of Giving Counsel

No rules or set pattern for giving counsel can be prescribed, since circumstances and individuals vary.

Counsel may be given either directly or indirectly, but it should be clear and specific enough to be understood by the person or persons needing the counsel.

Direct counsel is clearly expressed advice that leaves no question in the mind of the person as to the nature of the problem or as to what is expected of him to correct the matter.

Indirect counsel leaves much to the discernment of the person being counseled. The facts or circumstances may or may not be specifically stated.

Indirect counsel may be given to a group, allowing each one to make personal application.

Questions may be effective in helping an individual to analyze his own situation or needs.

**Always keep the following recommendations in mind when giving counsel (*w77* 12/1 pp. 721-3):**

The person is one of Jehovah's "sheep" and should be treated with tenderness. (Ps. 100:3; *w89* 9/15 p. 19)

If he has sinned, your endeavor should be to readjust him so that he will grow spiritually. (Gal. 6:1)

Prayerfully seek Jehovah's direction, and give appropriate counsel in a loving manner.

Be sure the counsel is based solidly on God's Word.

Take sufficient time, and endeavor to reach the heart of the person, his inner self.

Take time for research, if that is needed, before you give counsel or answer his questions.

If you cannot take the necessary time, it would be better to let another elder handle the matter.

When meeting with the brother, take time to listen; be sure you have all the facts.

Discuss the application of appropriate scriptures, and be sure that he understands.

**For corrective counsel to be constructive and effective, all pertinent factors must be understood by you and the one whom you are counseling.**

The one being counseled must know exactly what is being called into question, why it was wrong, and what should be done to correct the situation.

He needs to be encouraged to turn around and take a right course. (Heb. 12:12, 13)

## **Elders Themselves Need Discipline and Counsel From Jehovah**

**Elders should not consider themselves to be above the need to receive counsel. (Rom. 3:23)**

Regularly take time to read and meditate on Jehovah's Word. (Ps. 1:1, 2)

Be willing to learn from your own mistakes and those of others. (1 Tim. 5:20)

**We need to pay attention to the counsel of the faithful and discreet slave and its appointed representatives. (Heb. 13:7, 17)**

At times a traveling overseer or a fellow elder may have to offer counsel to you. (Compare Galatians 2:11-14.)

**Individually, counsel may come to us in a kindly remark from a fellow Christian, even someone not a servant. (1 Sam. 25:23-35; Prov. 15:31)**

Whatever the source, if it is in harmony with God's Word, accept the counsel and benefit from it. (Prov. 27:5)

(For additional information, see *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, pages 140-2.)

## **Proper Attitude When Being Counseled**

### **Listen carefully.**

Do not feel sorry for yourself and thereby miss benefiting from the good counsel being given.

Jesus admonished his disciples to get the sense of instruction. (Matt. 13:51, 52; 15:10)

### **Accept the counsel with gratitude, and do not try to justify or excuse yourself. (Heb. 12:5-7)**

Appreciate the Bible-based discipline received as from Jehovah. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

### **A humble and receptive attitude toward counsel will help you to be diligent in applying it.**

Apply the counsel given; the benefits are great. (Prov. 3:7, 8; 4:13; 19:20)



# Overseers

## ‘Ruling for Justice Itself’

Jehovah, as a loving Shepherd, has directed overseers to “rule as princes for justice itself.” (Isa. 32:1, 2) Since Jehovah God is holy, he requires that all those who worship him be spiritually and morally clean. (1 Pet. 1:14-16) As appointed overseers, you have a large part in safeguarding the cleanness of the congregation.

Protective care is a basic idea embraced in the word “overseer” (*e-pi’sko-pos*), which carries also the thought of one who watches over, a guardian, a shepherd of the flock. You have the responsibility to cultivate in the hearts of the brothers a love for what is good and a hatred for what is bad, wicked. (Rom. 12:9) By holding to God’s Word and by effectively using the art of teaching, you will be able to help your brothers not only to understand what is right and what is wrong but also to have an active part in keeping the congregation clean and chaste for public service to Jehovah.

### How Elders Promote Justice

**All elders are responsible to shepherd the flock, to teach, reprove, reprimand, and exhort as necessary. (Titus 1:9-14)**

When teaching, state clearly what God requires, and encourage faithful adherence to his righteous principles.

Help fellow believers to appreciate their responsibility to keep the congregation clean.

Assist them to understand that this involves:

Keeping their own personal conduct chaste.

Listening to their Bible-trained conscience.

Relentlessly resisting temptations.

Refusing to feed their minds on immoral ideas; perceiving how wrong thoughts lead to wrong actions.

Parents' instilling moral character in their children.

Younger ones' obeying their parents.

Refusing to imitate the world and its unscriptural ways.

Teaching interested persons the Bible's high moral standards.

**Set a fine example yourself in attitude, conduct, and speech so that the congregation can imitate your faith. (Heb. 13:7)**

Display the traits of a spiritual man; do not give way to unclean practices of a physical man. (1 Cor. 2:14, 15)

Your example will help your brothers to have "the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. 2:16)

**Take the initiative to help anyone in the congregation who has taken some false step; do your best to readjust him. (Gal. 6:1)**

Encourage good associations; warn the brothers to guard against bad associations both inside and outside the congregation. (1 Cor. 15:33)

Yet, do not create ill will toward a weak one in the congregation who is being helped.

Some may not yet have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish right and wrong. (Heb. 5:14)

Keep watch over their souls, since you will render an account for them too. (Heb. 13:17)

Discern the difference between a weak person and a wicked person.

**Deal with your brothers as Jehovah would deal with them. (Eph. 5:1)**

Always give them direction from God's Word; avoid giving your own opinions. (2 Tim. 4:2)



Be just yet kind in all your dealings. (Mic. 6:8)

Manifest humility by showing empathy, since you are also a mere human made of dust. (Ps. 103:13, 14)

### **Act as qualified judges.**

Keep the spirit of the world out of the congregation. (1 Cor. 2:12; Eph. 2:1, 2)

Reprove and readjust wrongdoers. (Titus 1:9)

Remove unrepentant wrongdoers. (1 Cor. 5:7, 13)

## **Uphold Jehovah's Righteousness**

**Wrongdoing is increasing in frequency and in depravity; such can infiltrate and affect the Christian congregation. (2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13; Jude 3, 4, 11-13)**

**The Scriptures clearly show that Jehovah forbids certain conduct among his clean people; brothers need to uphold Jehovah's righteous standards regarding the following:**

### ***Manslaughter.***

A degree of guilt could result from careless driving, careless maintenance of one's automobile, or other careless or thoughtless action that causes injury or death. (Compare Deuteronomy 22:8.)

Being a professional boxer may be viewed in a similar way. (*w81* 7/1 pp. 30-1)

Attempted suicide may be the result of deep despair or major depression; deal carefully and compassionately with such a person. In most cases a judicial hearing is not required. (Ps. 88:3, 17, 18; Prov. 15:13; Eccl. 7:7; *g90* 9/8 pp. 22-3; *w90* 3/15 pp. 26-30; *w90* 3/1 pp. 5-9; *w83* 8/1 pp. 3-11)

### ***Sexual misconduct, including adultery, fornication, and other forms of "por-nei'a."***

*Uncleanness* includes an intentional momentary touching of sexual parts or caressing of breasts. (1 Thess. 4:7, 8; 1 Tim. 5:1, 2)

Such minor uncleanness can be handled at the discretion of an elder or two; it does not require a judicial hearing.

There is a need for strong counsel, admonition, and assistance to help the individual to maintain chaste conduct in the future.

If not corrected, such conduct may escalate in gravity and by frequent repetition become loose conduct.

*Loose conduct* is a shocking, flagrant disregard for Jehovah's moral standards. (Gal. 5:19; *w*83 3/15 p. 31; *w*73 9/15 pp. 574-6)

It may include the willful practice of heavy petting or the fondling of breasts.

The nature, circumstances, and actual extent of what has occurred may indicate loose conduct, which would require judicial action.

Such practices can easily lead to *por-nei'a*.

"*Por-nei'a*" involves immoral use of the genitals of at least one human (whether in a natural or a perverted way), and there must have been another party to the immorality—a human of either sex or a beast; willing participation incurs guilt and requires judicial action. It is not a casual touching of the sex organs between persons but involves the manipulation of the genitals. (*w*83 6/1 pp. 23-6; *w*83 3/15 pp. 30-1)

It includes oral and anal sex or mutual masturbation between persons not married to each other, homosexuality, lesbianism, fornication, adultery, incest, and bestiality. (Lev. 20:10, 13, 15, 16; Rom. 1:24, 26, 27, 32; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10)

Also included are sexual abuse of children, including practices involving a catamite (a boy kept for purposes of sexual perversion). (Deut. 23:17, 18, *Ref. Bi.*, ftns.)

Victims of sexual abuse need to be treated with extreme thoughtfulness and kindness. Elders should always do what they reasonably can to protect children from further abuse; follow the Society's directives on such matters. (*g*85 1/22 p. 8)

Self-abuse, or masturbation, is *not* “*por-nei’a*,” nor would one who was raped be guilty of *por-nei’a*. (*w*83 3/15 p. 30; *w*74 3/1 p. 160; *it*-1 pp. 862-4; *tp* p. 144)

The term *por-nei’a* lays emphasis on both the lewd nature and the intent of the person’s conduct, and it embraces all illicit sexual activity characteristic of that found in a house of prostitution.

Copulation (as in penetration) is not necessary to constitute *por-nei’a*, and neither is sexual climax.

In borderline cases, it is the responsibility of the judicial committee to weigh carefully the Scriptures and the particular facts in the case to determine whether *por-nei’a* was involved.

This responsibility should not be taken lightly, especially when Scriptural freedom to remarry is involved. (Mal. 2:16a)

### *Apostasy.*

Apostasy is a standing away from, a falling away, defection, rebellion, abandonment; it involves teaching false doctrines, supporting or promoting false religion and its holidays or interfaith activities. (Deut. 13:13, 15; Josh. 22:22, ftn.; Acts 21:21, ftn.; 2 Cor. 6:14, 15, 17, 18; 2 John 7, 9, 10; Rev. 18:4)

Those with sincere doubts should be helped, dealt with mercifully. (Jude 22, 23; *w*82 9/1 pp. 20-1; *w*80 8/1 pp. 21-2)

Apostasy includes action taken against true worship of Jehovah or his established order among his dedicated people. (Jer. 17:13; 23:15; 28:15, 16; 2 Thess. 2:9, 10)

Persons who deliberately spread (stubbornly hold to and speak about) teachings contrary to Bible truth as taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses are apostates.

If it is learned that a person has taken up association with another religious organization, the matter should be investigated, and if verified, a committee should be formed.

If it is clearly established that the person has joined another religion and intends to remain with it, the

elders would make a brief announcement to the congregation that such one has disassociated himself. (*w86* 10/15 p. 31)

Working secularly for a false religious organization could put one in a position similar to that of one preaching false doctrine. (2 Cor. 6:14-16)

Celebrating a false religious holiday would be similar to performing any other act of false worship. (Jer. 7:16-19)

The Bible condemns the following:

Causing divisions and promoting sects.

This would be deliberate action disrupting the unity of the congregation or undermining the confidence of the brothers in Jehovah's arrangement.

It may involve or lead to apostasy. (Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 3:10, 11)

The practice of spiritism. (Deut. 18:9-13; 1 Cor. 10:21, 22; Gal. 5:20)

Idolatry. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; 10:14)

Idolatry includes the possession and use of images and pictures that are employed in false religion.

*Drunkenness.* (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9, 10; *it-1* p. 656)

*Stealing, thievery, fraud.* (Lev. 6:2, 4; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Eph. 4:28; *it-1* p. 870)

*Deliberate, malicious lying; bearing false witness.* (Prov. 6:16, 19; Col. 3:9; Rev. 22:15; *it-2* pp. 244-5)

*Reviling, slander.* (Lev. 19:16; 1 Cor. 6:10; *it-1* pp. 989-91; *it-2* pp. 801-2)

*Obscene speech.* (Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:8)

*Failure to abstain from blood.* (Gen. 9:4; Acts 15:20, 28, 29)

*Greed—gambling, extortion.* (1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:8; *it-1* pp. 1005-6)

*Adamant refusal to provide materially for one's own family—leaving wife and children destitute when having the*

*means to provide.* (1 Tim. 5:8; *w*88 11/1 pp. 22-3; *km* 9/73 p. 8)

*Nonneutral activities.* (Isa. 2:4; John 6:15; 17:16)

*Fits of anger, violence.* (Prov. 22:24, 25; Mal. 2:16; Gal. 5:20)

*Misuse of tobacco or addictive drugs.* (2 Cor. 7:1; Mark 15:23; Rev. 21:8, *Int.*; 22:15, *Int.*)

*Loose conduct.* Term not restricted to sexual immorality. (Gal. 5:19, *Ref. Bi.*, ftn.; 2 Pet. 2:7, *Ref. Bi.*, ftn.; *w*83 3/15 p. 31; *w*73 9/15 pp. 574-6; *it-2* p. 264)

SUMMARY: There are varying degrees of wrongdoing. At times there may have been an overlapping of sins, and this must be discerned in order to determine the proper Scriptural view of a person's conduct. In all cases, elders should carefully weigh each situation or circumstance. They need to find out what actually occurred, the extent and nature of misconduct, intent and motive, frequency or practice, and so forth. Good judgment, reasonableness, and balance are necessary as elders assess conduct in the light of the Scriptures.

## Your Aim Should Be to Help the Person

**We want to help individuals to stay within Jehovah's spiritual paradise.**

When elders are approachable and display a genuine interest in the spiritual welfare of the congregation, they will keep themselves informed and alert to any special needs within the congregation.

In some cases an erring individual will come to the elders voluntarily, seeking aid and confessing his wrongdoing. (Prov. 28:13)

If the person is guilty of serious wrongdoing, it is wise for him to speak to one or more of the elders about the matter. (Jas. 5:16)

For gross sins committed, a judicial committee should be formed.

In other cases an accusation may be brought against a member of the congregation. (1 Cor. 1:11)

If a person has definite knowledge of wrongdoing that could contaminate the congregation, he is obligated to report the matter in order to keep the congregation clean. (Lev. 5:1; Num. 15:32-34; Prov. 29:24)

**A judicial committee is not automatically formed even when a person is accused of serious sin.**

Some matters may be handled by the elder who hears of the wrongdoing. (Gal. 6:1)

Although you may feel that your counsel will suffice to restore the individual, it is advisable to inform the presiding overseer of the matter; there may be other factors involved.

The matter may have come up before, or there may have been other acts of wrongdoing concerning which he has knowledge.

Some matters may be investigated and handled by two elders assigned by the body of elders.

**There are certain cases that the body of elders is responsible to investigate and, when necessary, appoint a judicial committee to handle:**

Gross sins—either those that have brought the congregation into public disrepute or those of a more private nature. (Rom. 2:21-24; 1 Cor. 5:1; 2 Cor. 7:11)

Any serious sin that constitutes a clear threat of contaminating the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:6, 9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 1:9, 10)

When an elder or a ministerial servant commits a gross wrong, he is morally obligated to inform the body of elders of his being reprehensible.

He would not qualify to continue in his appointed position of service.

The same would be true concerning a pioneer who becomes involved in serious sin.

Elders, ministerial servants, and pioneers should be irreprehensible and serve with a clean conscience. (1 Tim. 3:2, 8, 9; Titus 1:6)

### *Baptized minors.*

When a baptized minor becomes involved in wrongdoing that threatens the cleanness of the congregation, the assigned committee should meet with such individual just as they would with any other member of the congregation.

It would be best to meet with the youth and his or her Christian parents; the parents have the responsibility to raise him and train him.

Try to restore the individual, if this is possible. (Gal. 6:1, fn.)

If efforts to restore bring no response, disfellowshipping is in order.

When minors are disfellowshipped, parents are still responsible for raising, training, and teaching them, even studying with them if the minors are in their home. (*w88* 11/15 p. 20)

### *Married people.*

If the wrongdoer is a married woman, it would be best to meet with her and her believing husband.

He is her head, and his efforts to restore her and direct her can be very helpful.

If there is no response to efforts to bring about repentance, the wrongdoer should be disfellowshipped. (*w81* 9/1 pp. 22-7)

The disfellowshipping of a mate does not end marriage responsibilities.

### *Unbaptized publishers.*

Unbaptized publishers who engage in serious wrongdoing may be readjusted.

Two elders will talk with the wrongdoer and determine what action should be taken. (*w88* 11/15 pp. 18-20)

They may instruct him not to share in the public ministry or comment at meetings, and they may restrict him from being in the Theocratic Ministry School until he has made more spiritual progress.

If the wrongdoing is widely known but the person is repentant the Congregation Service Committee may arrange for an announcement to the congregation as follows: "A matter involving [name of person] has been handled, and he [she] continues to serve as an unbaptized publisher with the congregation." (w88 11/15 p. 18)

When the unbaptized publisher who is a wrongdoer is a minor, his or her Christian parents should be consulted to determine what they are doing to correct the wrongdoer. It may also be necessary to meet with the youth together with his parents.

In the case of unbaptized publishers who unrepentantly continue in wrongdoing despite all efforts to help them, an announcement can be made saying: "[Name of person] is no longer a publisher of the good news." (w88 11/15 p. 19)

Your goal in dealing with unbaptized publishers, whether youths or adults, is to help them. (1 Thess. 5:14)

### ***Baptized persons who have not associated for some time.***

If you learn of serious wrongdoing on the part of such a person, the matter should be investigated if it poses a threat to the congregation's cleanness and welfare or causes a public scandal.

Consider the following:

Does he still profess to be a Witness?

Is he generally recognized as such in the congregation and/or the community?

Does the person have a measure of contact or association with the congregation so that a leavening, or corrupting, influence exists?

How did the matter become known to the elders?



Is the person willing to meet with a committee, thus admitting accountability to the Christian congregation?

Depending upon length of inactivity and other factors suggested above, elders may determine to hold the matter in abeyance.

In such a case, a record of the person's questionable conduct should be made for the congregation file so that everything noted might be clarified when the person shows interest in becoming active again.

If the sinful conduct is known only to believing family members and no congregation action is taken because of the factors outlined above, believing relatives will likely determine to curtail family association severely, viewing the relative as bad association. (1 Cor. 15:33)

If the individual still professes to be a Witness and is willing to meet with the judicial committee, the matter should be handled in the normal way. However, when factors such as possible legal action exist, it is best to consult the Society before proceeding. (w87 9/1 p. 14)

**If individuals persist in “*walking disorderly*” in serious violation of well-established Bible principles, but not yet to a degree warranting judicial action, they may be “*marked*” by members of the congregation. (2 Thess. 3: 6, 14, 15; w85 4/15 pp. 30-1; om pp. 152-3)**

However, this would occur only after *repeated efforts* to provide authoritative Scriptural counsel and admonition have been ignored and in many cases after a warning talk has been given to the congregation. (w85 4/15 pp. 30-1; w81 9/1 pp. 19-21)

If a person who has been marked continues his wrongful course in brazen defiance of Christian standards, *adamantly rejecting loving Scriptural counsel*, judicial action may be taken if the situation becomes scandalous loose conduct.

## Propriety of Disfellowshipping

When making decisions or answering questions about judicial reproof, disfellowshipping, disassociation, or

reinstatement, elders should be certain that their decisions and answers are based solidly on the Bible and are in harmony with the most recent statements by the Society. (Compare 1 Corinthians 4:6.)

Before initiating a judicial hearing, elders assigned to serve on the judicial committee should *review* guidelines set out in *Units 5 (a), 5 (b), and 5 (c)* as well as examine pertinent scriptures and references in the Society's publications.

They should also be sure to proceed in harmony with *current information* published in *The Watchtower* and in letters from the Society.

### **Purposes served by disfellowshipping:**

Upholds Jehovah's name and standard of righteousness. (Acts 15:14; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; compare Isaiah 52:5.)

Protects the purity of the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 7:11)

May correct the unrepentant wrongdoer, bringing him to his senses. (2 Cor. 2:6-8)

### **Implications of Disassociation**

**Whereas disfellowshipping is an action taken by a judicial committee against unrepentant wrongdoers, disassociation is an action taken by an individual who has decided that he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. (1 John 2:19)**

God's Word speaks of those who renounce the way of the truth; they may do this either by written notice or by action. (*w*81 9/15 p. 23)

**If an individual takes a course contrary to the neutral position of the Christian congregation, the congregation is compelled to view him as one who has chosen to separate from us. (Isa. 2:4; John 15:17-19)**

A brief announcement should be made to notify the congregation that this individual, by his chosen course, no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. (The Society should be notified using the S-77 and S-79 forms.)

**If a baptized person insists that he does not want to be part of the congregation and requests that his name be removed from all our records, we should comply with his request.**

Since he takes such an adamant position, encourage him to put his request in writing.

If he refuses to do this but states resolutely before witnesses his decision to disassociate himself and not be known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the witnesses to his statement would be asked to put this in writing and sign it.

**In all cases of disassociation, a committee would consider the evidence regarding the matter.**

If the person has definitely terminated his status as a member of the congregation, the elders will make a brief announcement of his disassociation. (*w86 10/15 p. 31*)

The Society should be notified using the S-77 and S-79 forms.

He would be viewed as one who has disassociated himself.

**It will not be necessary for a committee to continue the investigation into alleged wrongdoing if the accused person makes known his decision to disassociate himself. (*w84 7/1 p. 31*)**

However, the committee would prepare a summary of the alleged offense(s) and the evidence of such.

This would be kept along with information regarding the disassociation.

If the person later requests reinstatement, these matters would need to be considered with him at that time.

**Those who disassociate themselves should be viewed and treated the same as disfellowshipped persons. (*w85 7/15 pp. 30-1*)**

If one disassociates himself and later wants to return to the congregation, he must request a hearing for reinstatement, the same as one who has been disfellowshipped.

## **Proper View of Disfellowshipped and Disassociated Persons**

**If an individual is trying to influence others to take an unscriptural course or is trying to deceive others, all should avoid him; he is described at 2 John 9-11.**

**Disfellowshipped and disassociated ones are shunned by those who wish to have a good relationship with Jehovah.**

Basic Scriptural counsel on the proper view of those who have been expelled from the congregation is set out in the apostle Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 5:11-13.

John counsels against speaking to or associating with a disfellowshipped or disassociated person so as not to be "a sharer in his wicked works." (2 John 11)

Scriptural and historical guidelines on how to view disfellowshipped and disassociated persons are found in *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1981, pages 20-31.

**We need to be especially cautious about contact with disfellowshipped persons who have apostatized and those who continue in their immoral conduct. (Titus 3:10, 11; 1 John 2:19)**

These can contaminate the congregation like gangrene. (2 Tim. 2:16-18)

**The principle set forth in Jesus' words at Matthew 10:34-38 has a bearing on situations involving disfellowshipped or disassociated relatives.**

Special and difficult problems may arise in relation to social gatherings.

Loyal worshipers of Jehovah will want to adhere to the inspired counsel at 1 Corinthians 5:11.

Normally, a close relative would not be disfellowshipped for associating with a disfellowshipped person unless there is spiritual association or an effort made to justify or excuse the wrongful course.

## **How funeral arrangements for a disfellowshipped person may be handled:**

If the disfellowshipped person had been giving evidence of repentance, some brother's conscience might allow him to give a Bible talk at the funeral home or grave site. However, the Kingdom Hall should not be used. (*w*81 9/15 p. 31; *w*77 6/1 pp. 347-8)

If the deceased still advocated false teachings or ungodly conduct, it would not be appropriate to give a funeral talk for him. (2 John 9-11)

**Keep in mind that all the related hardships and tests generated in this regard are an outgrowth of the wrong conduct of the disfellowshipped person.**

## **Cooperation Between Congregations**

**When a case being considered requires the cooperation of two or more congregations, do not hesitate to provide the assistance needed.**

**If a person has moved from one congregation to another, do not make the matter of jurisdiction an issue.**

Do you have the facts? Can you handle the case most effectively?

Then it may be appropriate for you to follow through without delay.

**If the wrongdoing involves persons who attend different congregations, seek assistance from elders in the other congregation(s) and benefit from their observations.**

The judicial committees can interview individuals separately and/or jointly to ascertain the facts and clarify discrepancies. (Prov. 18:13, 17)

If a joint meeting is held, thereafter the judicial committee of each congregation will withdraw and handle the case(s) of the person(s) from its own congregation.

Good communication and cooperation will minimize inconsistencies in the judgments rendered.

Do not let a matter remain unhandled.

## Confidentiality

Do not discuss private or judicial matters with members of your family, including your wife, or with others who are not involved. (*w*71 4/1 pp. 222-4)

Think before you speak.

Be extremely careful that you do not inadvertently disclose private information when speaking on the telephone while others are listening in or when people are nearby where they could possibly hear the conversation.

**At times, complicated judicial cases may necessitate consultation with an experienced mature elder in another congregation or with the circuit overseer.**

Generally, the pertinent details should be discussed, but names should not be used

However, when the circuit overseer is the elder consulted or when circumstances require that you contact the Society, use of names may be necessary. (*w*87 9/1 pp. 12-15; *km* 9/77 p. 6)

Be careful to *maintain confidentiality*. (Prov. 11:13; 15:22)

## Be “Imitators of God”

Jehovah is a God of justice; he is merciful, kind, loving, and patient. (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 37:28)

As you deal with your brothers, imitate Jehovah in displaying these qualities, and you will bring honor to him and be a blessing to your brothers. (Eph. 5:1)



# Sharing on a Judicial Committee

“When having a hearing between your brothers, you must judge with righteousness.” (Deut. 1:16) It is a serious responsibility to judge matters that affect people’s lives and relationships with others. Elders must have a reasonably complete picture when judging a matter so that their decisions will not be based on partial knowledge or on personal feelings. They also need heavenly wisdom in order to make proper application of God’s Word and to determine how far their showing mercy should extend. (Prov. 28:13; Jas. 2:13) They must treat every person with impartiality at all times and desire that the spiritually ill become well again, since a failure in this regard is unjust and violates the law of love.—1 Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:1-9; 5:14, 15; *w77* 3/1 pp. 146-52.

## Elders Are Teachers and Judges

**As “Judge of all the earth,” Jehovah provides fatherly correction and discipline whenever needed. (Gen. 18:25; Heb. 12:5, 6)**

He has raised up elders to serve as counselors and judges. (Isa. 1:26)

By judging in righteousness, you may turn others back from a sinful course. (Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23, 24)

God’s Word is the basis for needed correction. (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

The responsibility of elders involves more than handling judicial matters.

You must also teach, making clear what God requires.

Encourage the rendering of whole-souled service to God and faithful obedience to his righteous principles.



## Applying Jesus' Counsel on Handling Certain Wrongs

Some accusations involve minor misunderstandings that should be handled on a personal basis. (Matt. 5:23, 24; 6:12, 14; Eph. 4:25-27)

At Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus gave counsel on handling serious wrongs that might be settled on a personal basis. (*w*81 9/15 pp. 17-20; *om* pp. 142-5)

Jesus' counsel concerns serious sins committed against one personally, such as fraud or slander—sins serious enough to lead to a person's being expelled from the congregation.

The person who believes he has been wronged takes the first step toward resolving the matter; elders may encourage him to do this. (Matt. 18:15)

The second step involves taking one or two persons with him to speak with the individual. (Matt. 18:16)

These should preferably be witnesses of the alleged wrongdoing or respected brothers, usually elders, who can examine the evidence and offer counsel for resolving the matter.

They also become witnesses to the evidence presented in the discussion.

The person who believes he has been wronged takes the third step, bringing the matter to the congregation, as a last resort. (Matt. 18:17)

If the congregation elders are unable to bring a wrongdoer to his senses, he is to be treated "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector."

The unrepentant wrongdoer would be expelled (disfellowshipped) from the congregation.

## The Judicial Committee

Other cases of serious wrongdoing require special attention by the elders in order to determine what is needed

**to help the repentant wrongdoer and to preserve the spiritual health of all in the congregation.**

These include such sins as adultery, fornication, apostasy, and drunkenness. (See Unit 5 (a), pages 92-6.)

Before forming a committee, elders determine if the accusation has substance.

It must Scripturally be an offense serious enough to result in disfellowshipping.

There must be either two witnesses or a confession of wrongdoing.

If there is not enough evidence to form a committee but serious questions have been raised, two elders may be assigned to investigate the matter.

If a judicial committee is needed, elders who are present at the Kingdom Hall should determine which elders will serve on the committee and which one will be chairman.

The elders will take into consideration which elders are best qualified to handle the particular type of case that has arisen. (*km* 9/77 pp. 5-6)

It is usually best for newer elders to serve first with more experienced ones.

In a complex case, a judicial committee need not be limited to three members; it may warrant having four or even five experienced elders serve.

**More than one judicial committee may be operating at the same time in a congregation, depending on cases that arise.**

**Elders called upon to care for this responsibility must exercise heavenly wisdom, have good judgment, and be impartial. (Deut. 1:13, 16-18)**

A sound knowledge of Jehovah's righteous laws and principles is necessary. (Ps. 19:7-11)

They must weigh matters carefully, realizing that certain factors make situations differ from one another.

Instead of looking for rigid rules for guidance, elders should think in terms of principles; judge each case on its own merits.

Before handling a judicial case, elders should carefully review Units 5 (a), 5 (b), and 5 (c).

They may also need to do research in the Society's publications and recent correspondence from the Society to find information that may apply or be helpful.

Elders can be confident that with accurate knowledge, with experience and discernment, and with the help of God's spirit, they can judge in righteousness, wisdom, and mercy.

## Handling Judicial Cases

**Do not send an individual any kind of correspondence that directly accuses him of specific wrongdoing.**

It is best for two elders to speak with the individual and invite him to meet with the judicial committee.

Suitable arrangements should be made as to the time and place of the hearing.

State what the person's course of action is supposed to have been.

If it is necessary to send a written invitation, you should simply state what the individual's course is *alleged* to have been, the time and place of the hearing, and how the person can contact the chairman if the arrangements are inconvenient for him.

**If the accused wishes to bring witnesses who can speak in his defense regarding the matter, he may do so.**

However, observers are not permitted.

No tape-recording devices are allowed.

**If the accused repeatedly fails to come to the hearing, the committee will proceed with the hearing but will not**

**make a decision until evidence and any testimony by witnesses are considered.**

The committee should not take action against a person unless the evidence clearly proves this necessary.

Failure to appear before the committee is not in itself proof of guilt.

### **What kind of evidence is acceptable?**

There must be two or three eyewitnesses, not just persons repeating what they have heard; no action can be taken if there is only one witness. (Deut. 19:15; John 8:17)

Confession (admission of wrongdoing), either written or oral, may be accepted as conclusive proof without other corroborating evidence. (Josh. 7:19)

*Strong* circumstantial evidence, such as pregnancy or evidence (testified to by at least two witnesses) that the accused stayed *all night* in the same house with a person of the opposite sex (or in the same house with a known homosexual) under *improper circumstances*, is acceptable.

The testimony of youths may be considered; it is up to the elders to determine if the testimony has the ring of truth.

The testimony of unbelievers may also be considered, but it must be carefully weighed.

If there are two or three witnesses to the same kind of wrongdoing but each one is witness to a separate incident, their testimony can be considered.

Such evidence may be used to establish guilt, but it is preferable to have two witnesses to the same occurrence of wrongdoing.

## **Judging With Righteousness, Wisdom, and Mercy**

**Elders must exercise wisdom in their questioning and godly qualities in their judging.**

In giving counsel or rendering decisions, avoid expressing

opinions; be sure to judge in righteousness. (Deut. 1: 16, 17)

You must ask pertinent, discreet questions to isolate main issues and determine how or why a problem developed.

Probing questions should not go into needless details, especially in regard to sexual misconduct, unless this is *absolutely* necessary, such as in determining whether *por-nei'a* had been committed.

Elders need to treat the accused kindly and respectfully, never harshly. (*w89 9/15 p. 19*)

Seek divine wisdom to help you relate Bible laws to the issues raised or the charges being considered. (Jas. 1:5; 3: 17, 18)

You must exercise mercy in matters of judgment, not only by showing compassion in the judgment rendered but also by expressing kind consideration and pity in your efforts both to bring wrongdoers to repentance and to heal and restore those who are repentant. (Rom. 2:4; Jas. 5:14-16; Jude 22, 23)

**In cases where it is established that a serious sin was actually committed, the judicial committee should consider such factors as these:**

Is there evidence of the person's craving wrongful things or courting trouble? Or did the person momentarily succumb to weakness? (Jas. 4:1)

Was he aware of the gravity of his sin? (Gal. 6:1)

Had he been admonished that his course was leading toward danger? (1 Thess. 5:14)

What were the circumstances leading up to the wrongdoing?

Are there extenuating factors, such as emotional or mental disorders or having been a victim of some type of abuse in the past, that should be considered?

Was it a single offense, or was it committed more than once?

Was his confession voluntary, or did he have to be accused by others before confessing?

Was his reluctance to speak more a result of deep shame than of lack of repentance?

Above all, does he show true repentance and manifest a heartfelt desire to avoid repetition of the wrong?

**Even though the wrongdoer is guilty of a serious offense, elders on the judicial committee realize that their aim is to recover the one who has fallen into a wrong course, whenever this is possible. (Jude 23)**

If he listens to them, showing true repentance, it may be that he can be retained as a brother and thus be spared being disfellowshipped. (Prov. 19:20; compare Matthew 18:15-17.)

**Neither the gravity of the wrong nor bad publicity finally determines whether the person should be disfellowshipped; rather, the determining factor is the individual's sincere repentance or the lack of it.**

Some manifest repentance right after their sin by taking steps immediately to confess; others manifest repentance later, even during the meeting with the judicial committee. (*w83* 1/1 pp. 30-1)

It is in the person's favor if he voluntarily confesses, but the determining factor is: Is he repentant?

There is good reason for you to weigh carefully claims of repentance when the individual has shown himself to be guilty of hypocrisy, lying, or making deliberate efforts to deceive.

Also be cautious when it is apparent that the wrong act was preceded by deliberate scheming, perhaps in a cold, calculating way.

This is quite different from when an individual, under the unexpected pressure of certain tempting circumstances, gives in because of human weakness.

## Judgment Related to Repentance

Elders must be able to discern genuine repentance on the part of the wrongdoer. (*w81 9/1 pp. 24-6; it-2 pp. 770-4*)

Genuine repentance is vital for wrongdoers because it is the first step leading back to God. (Rom. 2:4)

**It is particularly important to be sure genuine repentance exists in cases of repeated sin, a practice of sin.**

If gross sin extended over a long period of time, particular care should be exercised in determining the genuineness of the repentance. (*w81 9/1 p. 26*)

Is the person cooperative? When questioned, are his answers forthright?

Was fear and weakness the reason he did not come forward and confess, or is he wicked, trying to fool the congregation?

Has he been counseled before for this sin?

**Repentance is generally manifested by works that befit repentance either before or during the committee hearing. (Compare Acts 26:20.)**

How true repentance can be recognized:

Has the individual contritely prayed to Jehovah and sought His forgiveness and mercy?

Caution: Some wrongdoers, though repentant, find it difficult to pray. (Jas. 5:14)

Has he admitted his wrongdoing, either voluntarily to some of the elders before the hearing or when confronted by his accusers?

Caution: Some people are so deeply ashamed that they are reluctant to speak. Or they have difficulty expressing themselves.

Has he made restitution, expressed willingness to do so, or apologized to offended persons, those damaged by his sinful course?

What seems to motivate the sadness, remorse, and regret he shows? Is it worldly sadness (sorrow over being caught) or heartfelt godly sadness? (2 Cor. 7: 8-11)

Does he have deep regret over a damaged relationship with Jehovah, remorse over the reproach he has brought upon Jehovah's name and people, and sincere longing to come back into God's favor?

Does his attitude include a heart-motivated rejection of the bad course as something repugnant, hated? (Rom. 12:9)

On occasion it may take *more than one meeting* for reproof to reach the wrongdoer's heart and move him to repentance.

However, the judicial committee is not obliged to meet repeatedly with the wrongdoer or put words in his mouth, trying to force him to repent, if it is obvious that he lacks godly sorrow.

In all cases, the elders on the judicial committee must weigh such factors as the following:

The seriousness of the wrong committed.

The time that has passed since it occurred.

The circumstances that led up to it.

The measure of willfulness shown.

Whether there was *deliberate* failure to heed earlier warning counsel.

**If all reasonable efforts have been made to readjust the one who has committed serious sins and yet he remains unrepentant, he must be disfellowshipped. (1 Cor. 5:1, 9-13)**

You must show respect for Jehovah's standard of righteousness and holiness.

You must also protect the congregation from willful sinners.

**The same principles will govern the judgment on the part of a judicial committee in cases of reinstatement.**



## The Responsibility of Judgment Is a Weighty One

Judging matters that affect people's lives and relationships is a serious responsibility; it calls for balance, discernment, and understanding. Rely on Jehovah's guiding spirit.

Elders on a judicial committee must weigh carefully both the interests of the individual and those of the congregation as a whole. (Jude 3, 4, 22, 23)

You must feel keenly your obligation before God to prevent wrongdoing from infiltrating the congregation.

At the same time, your manner of dealing with your brothers must always reflect Jehovah's wise and merciful ways.



# Handling Cases of Wrongdoing With Wisdom and Mercy

When man rebelled in Eden, Jehovah took prompt action. (Gen. 3:8-19, 23, 24) Today, elders must handle cases of wrongdoing and thus safeguard the spiritual environment of the congregation. Hence, they should be well-informed with regard to the application of Bible laws and principles.

When you as elders are assigned to care for a judicial problem, it is beneficial to take the necessary time to do research in the Bible, the Society's publications, and any special letters from the Society that may contain information applicable to the particular case. Prayerful consideration of such information would be appropriate before the committee initiates the hearing itself.

## Before Forming a Judicial Committee

**A person who becomes a witness to a serious sin should encourage the wrongdoer to report the matter to the elders.**

He may encourage the wrongdoer to seek help from the elders and confess; and if the wrongdoer does not do so, the witness will then inform the elders. (*w*85 11/15 pp. 19-21)

If there is no response from the accused, two elders should attempt to discuss the matter with him. If he denies wrongdoing, so that it is only one brother's word against another's, leave the matter in Jehovah's hands. (1 Tim. 5:19, 24, 25)

However, having the witness confront the accused alone may not be advisable in all cases.

For example:

When the witness is party to wrongdoing, such as in cases of fornication or adultery.

When the witness is a victim of the wrongdoer as in cases of incest or rape.

When the witness is extremely timid.

In such cases, or when other extenuating circumstances exist, two elders may discuss the matter with the accused, or an elder may accompany the witness to discuss the matter with the accused.

Of course, if it is determined that a judicial committee should be formed, the witness may need to testify at the hearing if the accused denies wrongdoing.

If there is another witness to the same type of sin on the part of the accused, this would be basis for forming a judicial committee. (See Unit 5 (b), page 111.)

## **Judicial Committee Hearing Procedure**

**After opening with prayer, the chairman states the reason for the meeting.**

He may offer a Scriptural point at the outset, such as from Proverbs 28:13 or James 5:14, 15.

Elders, by expressing the desire to be helpful, can do much to put the accused at ease. (*w*89 9/15 pp. 19-20)

The chairman invites the accused to make a personal statement.

**Present the witnesses one at a time unless the wrongdoer confesses.**

If the accused does not admit guilt, he should be informed as to the source of the charge(s) made against him.

Accusers should be willing to assume their responsibility, as was required in Israel. (Deut. 17:6, 7; 19:16-21)

The accused may also present witnesses whose testimony would have a bearing on the case.

The witnesses should not be present for the entire hearing, since they do not need to hear details and testimony that do not affect them.

However, witnesses to the wrongdoing should be present if it becomes necessary to continue the reproof of the accused "before all onlookers." (1 Tim. 5:20)

**The committee probes with pertinent questions in an effort to establish facts and ascertain the attitude of the accused.**

Is there sufficient evidence to establish by two witnesses or otherwise that the person is clearly guilty of serious wrongdoing? (Unit 5 (b) p. 111) Isolate specific offenses and available evidence.

While it is not appropriate to make extraordinary efforts or to prolong the case unnecessarily, skillful use of God's Word may reach the person's heart and bring him to repentance.

**Elders should be quick to listen but slow to indicate a preference or a leaning one way or the other.**

Wait until you have heard all the facts before reaching conclusions and making decisions. (Prov. 18:13)

If guilt is established, use God's Word to reprove the wrongdoer, showing the wrongness of the sin and of the steps that may have led to it.

You may need to do so in front of the witnesses of the sin ("onlookers") who have testified.

**After Scriptural discussion and after all evidence has been presented, dismiss the accused and any witnesses, and carefully review evidence and the attitude of the accused.**

If the accusation, or charge, has been proved true, is the wrongdoer repentant? If repentance is manifest, how was it demonstrated? (Unit 5 (b) pp. 112-15)

Depending on whether guilt is established and repentance shown, determine what action, if any, needs to be taken.

In complex cases, defer making a decision if you are not sure of the Bible's direction and the Society's counsel.

However, do not unduly prolong making a decision, as this can have a detrimental effect on the accused and the congregation.

Seek Jehovah's wisdom through prayer.

If the wrongdoer is guilty of gross sin but gives evidence of godly repentance, even as recently as at the hearing, the judicial reproof given by the committee may suffice; disfellowshipping may not be necessary. (2 Tim. 4:1, 2; Titus 1:9; *w83* 1/1 pp. 30-1)

Some wrongdoers have gone so far into a practice of sin or have been so persistently deceptive that it may be difficult to accept a claim of repentance. (1 Cor. 5: 3-5, 13)

If the person is guilty of a serious sin such as those listed in Unit 5 (a), pages 92-6, and is unrepentant, having a truly bad heart, and/or is determined to pursue a God-dishonoring course, he must be disfellowshipped, expelled.

**When the decision is made, inform the individual of it orally.**

If disfellowshipping is necessary, proceed as outlined under the next heading.

If disfellowshipping is not necessary, yet the accused is guilty of gross sin, see “Matters Regarding Judicial Reproof,” pages 123-4.

## **If the Decision Is to Disfellowship**

**Tell the guilty person the Scriptural reason(s) for the action.**

**Inform the wrongdoer that he may appeal in writing within seven days if he feels a serious error in judgment has occurred. (*om* p. 147; *km* 1/80 p. 4)**

Outline steps necessary for future reinstatement.

Be positive, assuring him that forgiveness is possible if he truly repents; the person may be in a distressed state of mind.

**If an appeal is lodged within the allotted time, no announcement is made pending the outcome of the appeal.**

In the meantime the accused person will be restricted

from commenting and praying at meetings or enjoying special privileges of service. (*om* pp. 147-8)

If the accused lodges an appeal but then deliberately fails to appear for the appeal hearing, the disfellowshipping action should be announced after reasonable efforts to contact the individual have been made either in person or by telephone.

**If an appeal is not made within seven days, announce the disfellowshipping.**

Allow the seven-day appeal period to elapse even if the person states he does not wish to appeal.

The presiding overseer should check the announcement to make sure that it conforms to the guidelines outlined by the Society.

An elder, perhaps the chairman of the judicial committee, should read the announcement.

Disfellowshipping *takes effect when the announcement is made* to the congregation.

**Using the forms provided by the Society, the branch office should be notified of the person's name, the Scriptural reason for the disfellowshipping, and the date of the action. (S-77 and S-79 forms)**

A brief review of the evidence that was presented should also be given.

A similar report is made when a person disassociates himself from the organization. (S-77 and S-79 forms)

A written summary of the case should be prepared by the committee and put in a sealed envelope to be placed in the congregation file.

**If a disfellowshipped individual moves to a different area, no announcement of his disfellowshipped status should be made from the platform of the new congregation.**

Publishers can be advised individually if they are inadvertently having association with such a one.

## Matters Regarding Judicial Reproof

**Reproof involves establishing wrongdoing and convincing the wrongdoer of the error.**

Thus, administering judicial reproof includes more than just making a decision or announcing it. (*w77* 11/15 pp. 691-2)

The aim is to help the person stop doing what is bad and establish himself as a practicer of what is good.

Help him to understand how there may have been related sins, which were less serious, that led to his serious deflection from Jehovah's law.

**Some wrongdoers may need to be judicially reproofed with severity to bring them to repentance. (Titus 1:13)**

**At times it is appropriate to administer judicial reproof "before all onlookers." (1 Tim. 5:20)**

Be sure to adhere to Scriptural and organizational guidelines when this is done. (*w81* 9/1 pp. 24, 26)

The "onlookers" may be those present as witnesses at the committee hearing or those who know of the sin.

If there are *good reasons* for it, an announcement of judicial reproof may be made to the congregation. (*w88* 11/15 p. 18; *w81* 9/1 pp. 26-7)

The degree or seriousness of the sin *is not* the determining factor for an announcement regarding judicial reproof.

In cases where sin is widely known or will no doubt become known, an announcement may be needed to safeguard the reputation of the congregation.

The committee may have *specific reasons* why the congregation needs to be somewhat on guard concerning the repentant wrongdoer. Perhaps he had been counseled several times concerning steps leading to the same wrongdoing.

In some cases the elders may feel it is necessary to warn the congregation about the type of conduct practiced.

If so and if no announcement is made, a talk may be



given at any time outlining clearly what the Scriptures have to say on the subject.

If an announcement regarding judicial reproof is made, a few weeks after the announcement such a talk may be given.

Nothing should be said that would connect anyone with the type of sin being discussed. Rather, cover Scriptural principles outlining the seriousness of such sinful conduct and how to avoid it.

### **In all cases of judicial reproof, restrictions will be imposed.**

If the wrongdoer is an elder, a ministerial servant, or a pioneer, he should be removed. (*w77* 11/15 pp. 697-8)

It is important that the judicial committee monitor the spiritual progress of a person who has been judicially restricted; appropriate counsel and spiritual encouragement should be given periodically. (*w81* 9/1 p. 27; *km* 3/75 p. 4)

Restrictions should be removed in due course as warranted by the individual's observed spiritual recovery.

If a brother who has recently been judicially reprovved moves to another congregation, it is necessary to inform the elders of that congregation about any restrictions that may be in effect.

This will enable the elders in his new congregation to continue supervising the restoration of his privileges and help him toward full spiritual recovery.

No announcement of such previous judicial reproof is made in the new congregation. (*km* 3/75 p. 4)

## **Appealing Judicial Decisions**

If the accused believes that an error in judgment was committed, he should make known in writing his reason for requesting an appeal, doing so within seven days from the time he was notified of the decision of the committee.

His written statement should be addressed to the judicial committee that decided the matter.

The judicial committee chairman will promptly contact the circuit overseer, who will then designate elders to serve on the appeal committee.

If possible, elders selected by the circuit overseer for hearing the appeal should not be from the same congregation as the original committee.

If the basis for the appeal is not clear in the written statement, try to determine which of the following is claimed:

He contends that a disfellowshipping offense was not committed.

He denies committing the alleged wrong.

He admits to wrongdoing but believes he was repentant.

The appeal should be heard even if the basis for it may not appear sound. (*km* 1/80 p. 4)

If the person should appeal after seven days, immediately contact the Society for direction.

### **The hearing is conducted in a manner similar to the first judicial committee hearing.**

It may be necessary to rehear all the evidence relevant to the case, including that which was presented originally and any new evidence now available.

The judicial committee that heard the original case should be present at the appeal hearing(s).

Prior to the appeal hearing, the original committee should furnish the appeal committee with the completed S-77 and S-79 forms along with whatever written records it has from the first hearing(s).

If either the original committee or the accused believes that earlier testimony or evidence is being changed, this can be so stated following the presentation of the alleged altered evidence.

Following the presentation of the evidence, the appeal committee should deliberate in private.

The appeal committee may need to question either the original committee or the accused separately.

**The appeal committee is to determine whether there was an error in judgment or the decision was basically sound according to information available; it should also determine the attitude of the accused at the original committee hearing(s).**

The appeal committee is to ascertain whether there was a Scriptural basis for the original action taken and whether the individual was repentant *at the time of the hearing by the original judicial committee.*

There may be mitigating circumstances the committee overlooked, such as a history of some type of abuse when a child, emotional or mental disorders, or other.

While these do not justify wrongdoing, understanding the underlying reason or causes of emotional or mental problems can help the committee to reach a balanced and compassionate judgment. (*w90 2/15 pp. 21-3; w83 10/1 pp. 27-31*)

The wrongdoer may admit guilt on a disfellowshipping charge but claim that at the time of the original judicial committee hearing, he was repentant. (*w83 1/1 pp. 30-1*)

The appeal committee will examine evidence to see if he had genuinely repented. (Unit 5 (b) pp. 112-15; *w81 9/1 pp. 25-6*)

The appeal committee may find that while the original basis for disfellowshipping was invalid, other valid grounds for disfellowshipping exist.

If this happens, the individual should be given sufficient time, even several days if needed, to present any evidence or witnesses that he feels will disprove the new allegations.

If the new allegations are nonetheless established and if the person does not demonstrate genuine repentance, the appeal committee may decide to disfellowship on these new grounds.

The appeal committee should then inform the accused of its decision to uphold the disfellowshipping and

should also inform him of the steps he needs to take to gain reinstatement.

New S-77 and S-79 forms should be made out giving the proper information, and these along with the original forms and correspondence related to the case should be sent to the branch office.

**When the disfellowshipping is upheld by the appeal committee, there is no further right to appeal. However, if an individual persists in believing a serious error in judgment has occurred, the appeal committee should inform him that he may submit his allegations in writing to the appeal committee within seven days for transmittal to the branch office.**

The appeal committee will include this statement along with the information being sent to the branch office.

*No announcement of disfellowshipping should be made until observations are received from the branch office.*

If no written claim of a serious error in judgment has been provided to the appeal committee within seven days (as outlined above), the appeal committee should send in the S-77 and S-79 forms and tell the original committee to announce the disfellowshipping.

**If the appeal committee disagrees with the decision to disfellowship, the decision should be discussed with the original judicial committee privately.**

If both committees agree that the person should not be disfellowshipped, the individual should be so advised.

The appeal committee will send the branch office a brief explanation of the mutual conclusion not to disfellowship reached by both committees, which should clearly state that the original judicial committee agrees with the decision.

The original committee will receive a copy of the letter, which will be kept in a sealed envelope in the congregation's confidential file.

At times the original committee and the appeal committee may hold conflicting opinions.

When this occurs, the individual should not be given any indication of the conclusions of the appeal committee. Simply tell the person that the decision is pending.

The appeal committee should send the S-77 and S-79 forms to the branch office with a letter giving reasons for its decision and should include a letter from the original committee expressing the reason(s) for disagreement.

The appeal committee gives the original committee a copy of its report. Both committees await a reply from the branch office.

It may be that certain important factors are being overlooked by one or both of the committees.

The branch office will be glad to comment on any such factors and offer additional Scriptural assistance as may be needed. Such information will be supplied for the appeal committee.

Further meetings with the accused or between the committees may or may not be necessary to conclude the case.

Once any differences between the committees have been resolved in the light of the Scriptural principles cited by the branch office, the appeal committee should inform the individual of the decision.

If the decision is to disfellowship, the original judicial committee will arrange to make the announcement to the congregation.

## **Reinstatement**

**While there should be no hasty action in reinstating disfellowshipped individuals, consideration should be given to a plea for reinstatement when this is requested.**

**Once a year the body of elders reviews a list of those in the congregation territory who are disfellowshipped or**

**disassociated. They will call on each one they select in order to see if he wants to return. (*w*91 4/15 pp. 22-3)**

The body will assign two elders to make each call, preferably elders familiar with the case.

During a brief visit or two, the elders can kindly explain what the individual can do to return.

They will report the results to the Congregation Service Committee, and the body will be informed at the next meeting of the elders.

**If someone asks about reinstatement or if by changing his course gives evidence of repentance and a desire to be reinstated, the authorized elders may speak with the individual and kindly explain what he needs to do in order to be reinstated.**

There is an advantage to having the elders who served on the judicial committee that disfellowshipped the individual also serve on the committee for the reinstatement if this is possible and they are still serving as elders in the congregation handling the request for reinstatement.

**In hearing pleas for reinstatement, elders need to be balanced.**

Genuine repentance and a turning away from the wrong course—not the attitude of others, or merely the time elapsed—are the chief determining factors in deciding when a person may be reinstated. (1 Cor. 5:1, 11-13; 2 Cor. 2:6, 7)

Elders should be sure that sufficient time has passed for the disfellowshipped person to prove that his profession of repentance is genuine. (*it*-2 p. 771)

Consider the *overall pattern* of his life. Does it now show that he is repentant? (*w*77 3/1 p. 152)

If so, elders will guard against going to extremes by exacting a point-by-point admission of sins that may not have been clearly proved.

Where there is evidence of *conspiracy* between individuals to put away their mates and marry each other, considerable time should elapse before a hearing for reinstatement may be held. (*w79* 11/15 pp. 31-2)

**If it is determined that the wrongdoer is sincerely repentant, has discontinued his former wrong conduct, and is doing works that befit repentance, he can be reinstated. (Compare Acts 26:20.)**

The decision to reinstate is made by a judicial committee of the congregation that took the disfellowshipping action. The secretary should sign and return the S-79b card to the Society immediately. (*om* pp. 149-50)

If the disfellowshipped person has moved, his request for reinstatement may be heard by a local judicial committee where he is now attending meetings. Thereafter, that committee will give the body of elders of the congregation that disfellowshipped the individual its recommendation.

If the two congregations are reasonably close to each other, the judicial committee of the congregation that took the disfellowshipping action should meet with the disfellowshipped individual after receiving the recommendation of the committee of the congregation where he made his plea for reinstatement.

Reinstatement is announced in the congregation where the person was disfellowshipped as well as in the congregation where he now attends.

**When an individual is reinstated, he will still need much spiritual assistance.**

The elders should see that definite arrangements are made to help the person regain spiritual health and strength. (Col. 2:7; Titus 2:1, 2)

They may arrange for a Bible study to be conducted, which would be reported as field service.

Restrictions should be imposed to help the person see the need of continuing to make ‘straight paths for his feet’ and also out of consideration for the congregation’s conscience. (Heb. 12:13)

The privilege of sharing in the field service is restored when the individual is reinstated.

Other privileges, such as commenting at meetings, handling parts on the program, and offering prayer at meetings, can be restored progressively when it is determined that the individual has progressed spiritually to the point that he is qualified and when it is judged by the elders that the extending of such privileges will not be offensive to the congregation.

It will be up to the elders of the congregation where he now is located to decide when certain privileges may be restored.

**Circumstances of each case govern the length of time that should elapse before *recommending a reinstated brother* for additional privileges and responsibility.**

Carefully consider possible effects if the individual were to be appointed. Would it be a *cause for stumbling* among the brothers?

The privilege of serving as ministerial servant or elder can be recommended only after he has had ample time to *prove* himself to be irreprehensible and is again “free from accusation” and has “freeness of speech.” (1 Tim. 3:2, 9, 10, 13)

He must live down the reproach and build up a convincing record of righteousness, which may take a number of years.

If wrongdoing occurred in another congregation, the feelings of members of that congregation should be considered.

In cases of scandal, he might not be able to live down his wrongdoing sufficiently to qualify for an appointment to serve as a ministerial servant or an elder for a very long time.



## Clarifications and Guidelines on Handling Certain Matters

Even though *all lying* is bad, when considering a case of lying, elders should use good judgment, balance, and reasonableness in determining the gravity of the sin and whether it is a practice.

Some lying may involve either exaggerating the facts or petty, misleading statements of relatively minor consequence.

The person may have lied because of momentary pressure or fear of man. (Matt. 26:69-75)

Unless it is established by witnesses or confession that he has made a practice of flagrant, malicious lying, the elders would endeavor to readjust the person through loving Scriptural admonition without holding a judicial hearing.

**If there is a question about the *mental state* of a baptized individual who commits some deed for which he might be disfellowshipped, a judicial committee should consider the facts of the case.**

Weigh the evidence along with the extent of mental incompetence, and then decide whether some announcement should be made or whether disfellowshipping should occur.

Although there may be a basis for showing more than ordinary consideration and patience, the elders must protect the cleanness and spiritual well-being of the congregation. (1 Thess. 5:14)

***Marriage* is of divine origin. (Mark 10:6-9)**

Engagement is a serious commitment and is normally a personal matter. (Matt. 5:37)

However, unilaterally breaking an engagement may require inquiry if the one doing so has an organizational position of responsibility. (*w*75 6/15 pp. 382-4)

Marrying an *unbeliever* is contrary to Bible principles. (Deut. 7:3, 4; 1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14, 15)

If a dedicated, baptized Christian marries an unbeliever, this would result in disqualification from all special privileges for the time being. (1 Tim. 3:2, 4, 5, 12, 13; *w*82 3/15 p. 31)

If the parent is an elder, a ministerial servant, or a pioneer and encourages, allows, or gives tacit approval to the marriage, this raises questions regarding his or her qualifications.

Use of the Kingdom Hall must be in harmony with God's standards.

It would not be used for marriages of unbelievers or the reenactment of marriages, such as on occasions of anniversaries. (*w*84 4/15 pp. 10-15; *km* 12/81 p. 4)

However, on occasion the body of elders may decide to allow two unbaptized publishers, who are regularly associating and awaiting an assembly to get baptized, to be wedded at a Kingdom Hall.

In each case, the body of elders will decide when the Kingdom Hall may be used for a wedding.

The *wedding vows* that were published in the April 15, 1984, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 14, and that appear in the marriage outline, S-41, should be used.

These vows may be modified according to the local law, but privately chosen and worded vows should not be used.

### ***Divorce and remarriage was not Jehovah's original purpose for man.***

The Scriptures urge married persons to remain together as "one flesh." (Gen. 2:22-24; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Cor. 7:10-16; *w*83 3/15 p. 29)

Many marital problems can be resolved by following the principle of Matthew 18:15.

The Law of Moses allowed the husband, not the wife, to divorce on broad grounds of "something indecent." (Deut. 24:1)

Jesus Christ strengthened the marriage arrangement for

Christians but gave equal right of divorce to the wife. (Mark 10:11, 12)

In the Christian congregation, divorce is allowed only for “fornication,” or *por-nei'a*. (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9)

The marriage bond is not automatically broken in God’s eyes by sex relations outside the marriage union; the innocent mate may forgive. (Hos. 3:1-3; 1 Cor. 13:4-8)

While elders should be informed one way or the other, it is up to the innocent mate to decide whether to divorce or not.

The innocent mate should be informed that *resuming sexual relations* with the adulterous mate would indicate forgiveness and would therefore cancel the Scriptural ground for divorce. (*w*81 3/1 pp. 30-1)

Forgiven adultery cannot be used later as a basis for divorce, but unrevealed instances of adultery, if later brought to light, could be so used. (*w*74 8/15 pp. 511-12)

Forgiveness of adultery involves a willingness on the part of the innocent mate to resume sexual relations with the adulterous mate within a reasonable period of time. (*w*74 11/1 pp. 671-2)

A person guilty of adultery could obtain a legal divorce and be viewed by the congregation as free to remarry if the innocent mate refuses to resume sexual relations for a very prolonged period and yet has not sought a legal divorce.

By withholding the marriage due, the nonadulterous mate would be indicating that no forgiveness has been extended.

The elders would consider evidence from the adulterous mate to determine that there is a definite rejection by the nonadulterous mate.

When divorce is the course decided upon, a divorce freeing a Christian for remarriage should be obtained by the innocent mate if possible or by the guilty mate with the innocent mate’s consent; both of them are then free to remarry.

If the guilty one *unilaterally* obtains a divorce over the objection of the innocent mate, this does not free the guilty one to remarry.

If he marries someone else while the innocent mate is still willing to forgive his adultery and resume their marital arrangement, his is an *adulterous marriage*. (Luke 16:18)

This calls for congregation judicial action in addition to any already taken, unless he has already been disfellowshipped.

A *divorced couple* (even if only legally divorced) who have sex relations with each other commit fornication. (Heb. 13:4; *w82* 9/1 p. 31)

It is a matter for personal decision if a *separated couple* choose to have sexual relations. (Rom. 14:12)

A person who commits adultery after having been divorced by his or her mate on unscriptural grounds would be Scripturally free to remarry, since he or she had already been rejected by the mate that obtained the divorce.

The case of adultery would be dealt with by a judicial committee.

***Courting or dating when one party is not free to marry is wrong.*** (*w80* 8/1 pp. 30-1; *w68* 4/15 pp. 255-6)

Strong counsel and repeated warnings should be given, and if the counsel is ignored, the individual(s) may be marked. (2 Thess. 3:14, 15)

When such action has escalated to the point where it has become shocking and *repeated efforts* to help adjust the situation have been ignored, there may be basis for taking disfellowshipping action. (Gal. 5:19; *w83* 3/15 p. 31; *w73* 9/15 pp. 574-6)

**If a person who has entered into an *adulterous marriage* is eventually reinstated, it would be a rare case for him to be recommended to serve in a responsible position in the congregation, at least not until after the remarriage or death of the mate he put away without Scriptural basis.**

In any event, a considerable number of years should have passed. (1 Tim. 3:2, 12, 13; *w*83 3/15 p. 29; *w*80 9/15 p. 31)

**Christians should avoid *gambling* in all its various forms, including lotteries. (Compare Isaiah 65:11; *w*89 7/15 p. 30; *g*82 7/8 pp. 25-7; *g*81 11/22 p. 27.)**

Gambling can lead to or incite unchristian traits, such as greediness and covetousness. (Rom. 13:9, 10; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Col. 3:5)

Additional bad results from gambling and association with gamblers give true Christians further reasons for avoiding it. (1 Cor. 15:33; *g*85 8/8 pp. 22-3; *g*82 7/8 pp. 25-7; *w*80 9/1 pp. 29-30; *w*72 10/1 pp. 593-4)

If a person makes a practice of gambling and after repeated counsel unrepentantly pursues a course of greediness, he could be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. (*w*80 9/1 pp. 29-30; *w*67 6/15 p. 356)

A person must guard against the view that petty gambling solely for entertainment is harmless. (Gal. 6:7, 8)

However, elders would not want to get involved in what publishers do in this respect unless spirituality is endangered, either that of the individual or that of the congregation.

If a business concern gives out prizes to winners of a contest or to customers whose names were drawn from its customer list, it may not be wrong to accept such a prize if no money has to be paid to participate. (*w*73 2/15 p. 12/)

A person needs to be careful that accepting such a prize does not stir up greed.

The language used in advertising a drawing or contest, as well as the kind of sponsors, may involve elements with which a Christian would not want to be identified, either for personal reasons or for fear of stumbling others. (Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 10:31-33; *g*75 7/8 p. 28)

Gambling-related employment is not appropriate for a Christian.

An individual continuing employment directly involved with gambling or employment making him a *clear accomplice* or *promoter* of a wrong practice would be subject to disfellowshipping after being allowed time, usually 90 days, to make the needed adjustment. (*km* 9/76 pp. 3-6)

**God's Word counsels all Christians to be *law-abiding*.  
(Rom. 13:1; Titus 3:1)**

Christians are to pay to Caesar what is Caesar's and should obey the laws of the land in all matters where there is no conflict with God's law. (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1; *w*90 11/1 pp. 10-15, 18-28)

By doing this, they have no need to fear being punished by the authorities as lawbreakers, and each one can maintain a good conscience. (Rom. 13:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:16)

When human laws conflict with God's law, true Christians follow the example of the apostles of Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29-32)

In all business matters, Christians should endeavor to maintain a fine reputation.

They should not be a part of any business that is forbidden by Caesar's law or engage in business practices that are illegal.

It is wise to avoid making purchases from or employing the services of individuals or businesses known to be illegal in their operation.

A person's employment should also be honorable so that it will not become a cause for reproach or stumbling.

Following Scriptural counsel protects a Christian from consequences of lawbreaking and protects his conscience. (Rom. 13:3, 5)

If the elders learn of illegal activity or of some serious crime on the part of a member of the congregation, they may not be obliged by law to report the offender or the offense to secular authorities.

Though it is not the responsibility of the Christian congregation to enforce Caesar's laws, yet the very nature of some crimes demands that they be reported to secular authorities.

It may be necessary to encourage the wrongdoer to turn himself in to secular authorities. Before any steps are taken in this regard, contact the branch office. Of course, review the latest Society directives on such matters before proceeding.

Although not enforcers of Caesar's laws, in cases that also involve the breaking of God's law, elders must give consideration to what has taken place.

Depending on the wrongdoing committed, a judicial committee hearing may be needed.

As suggested by the apostle Paul's comments regarding Onesimus, a person who was guilty of illegal activities before coming to a knowledge of the truth is not required to settle these things with the authorities prior to baptism. (Philem. 10-18; *w78* 9/15 pp. 30-1)

A former thief would not be required to make restitution to all from whom he stole before baptism, although in some cases his conscience may move him to do so. (Luke 19:8)

The blood of Jesus Christ covers the sins of such new ones. They may get baptized. However, it is best to be judicious as to extending additional privileges. (Isa. 1:18; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; 1 John 1:7)

If a person approaching baptism is an *illegal alien*, he should be urged to do what he can to rectify his status with regard to the law of the land. (*w77* 3/15 pp. 191-2)

The Christian congregation today follows a course harmonious with the Biblical pattern of the apostle's dealing with the case of Onesimus. (Philem. 8-22)

Overseers are not to police the lives of the brothers, nor are they obligated to become acquainted with all the details of civil and criminal law so as to enforce these. Just as they do not check to see if someone's home meets every detail of the building

code, they do not investigate in order to determine whether a person has satisfied every detail as to his legal situation in the country before allowing him to get baptized or to continue in the congregation.

Baptism would not be denied such a person, but he would not be viewed as exemplary and would not be used in any responsible position in the congregation. The same would apply to a person who uses fraudulent or illegal identification.

A brother who has notified the authorities of his illegal status and filed papers to resolve his situation would not be restricted as to representing the congregation in prayer, sharing in teaching, or being appointed as a pioneer, a ministerial servant, or an elder if otherwise qualified.

Such privileges may be extended even though the authorities do not act promptly on his request for permission to remain in the country. He is no longer a fugitive.

**Certain disputes between brothers should not be taken to *secular courts* but should be resolved in harmony with Jesus' counsel at Matthew 18:15-17. (Unit 5 (b) p. 108)**

At 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, the apostle Paul gave strong counsel that Christians should not take other Christians before secular courts to settle personal disputes that should be settled with the help of the congregation elders. (g83 2/8 pp. 13-15; w77 3/1 p. 147; w73 11/15 pp. 703-4)

For some disputes, a neutral brother, or elders, may act as arbitrator.

If an individual ignores God's Word on this matter, it *may* affect his congregation privileges.

However, there are legal matters over which the congregation does not have authority and which may therefore be taken to a secular court for judgment without violating the principle or the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. These include:

Getting a divorce decree, child custody and support, alimony.



Obtaining insurance compensation.

If a person suffers loss or is injured in or by an automobile owned by a spiritual brother, it might be necessary legally to sue the brother in order to obtain compensation from the brother's insurer.

Being listed among creditors in bankruptcy procedures.

Probating wills.

Certain countersuits. For example:

If a *worldly creditor* sues a brother, it might be necessary for the brother, for his own protection, to file a countersuit even though spiritual brothers are included in the action.

If a brother takes legal action against another baptized Witness, it would not be a violation of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 for the one being sued to defend himself or to countersue. (This is true whether the matter was first taken before the elders or not.)

**Jehovah's Witnesses *maintain neutrality* with regard to the political and military affairs of the nations. (John 17:16; *rs* pp. 269-76)**

They do not interfere with what others do as to voting in political elections, running for or campaigning for political offices, joining nonneutral organizations, shouting political slogans, and so forth. (*w*86 9/1 pp. 19-20; *w*68 6/1 pp. 351-2)

Since true dedicated Christians are "no part of the world," if a member of the congregation unrepentantly pursues a course in violation of his Christian neutrality, he thereby disassociates himself from the neutral Christian congregation. (John 15:19; 17:14-16; *w*82 1/15 p. 31)

Elders should talk to one known to be contemplating taking such a course, since he may be doing so in ignorance. (Ps. 119:67; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 1:13)

If he disregards the help proffered and pursues a course in violation of Christian neutrality, a committee should send the facts substantiating the disassociation to the branch office on the S-77 and S-79 forms.

An announcement is usually made that the individual has disassociated himself from the congregation, and the person should be told *orally* about his position. If for some extenuating reasons no announcement is made, persons in the congregation who might be visited by the disassociated person may be informed privately. The individual should be treated as one who is disfellowshipped. See Unit 5 (a), pages 101-2.

When asked to express an opinion or sign a petition on a community issue, a person must weigh the matter carefully. Such action may or may not be appropriate. Is it a political issue? (*w83 3/1 pp. 30-1*)

If a government requests temporary use of Kingdom Halls or congregation equipment in times of emergency, it would not be a violation of neutrality to comply.

In some lands, all individuals are required to build roads or work in the fields. Where this is not a form of military service but is comparable to a tax, there would be no objection as long as the work itself is not in violation of Bible principles. (*Matt. 5:41; 22:21*)

**By following balanced Bible counsel, Christians can usually avoid getting into situations that might involve acts of *self-defense*. (*Prov. 15:1; 17:14; 26:17*)**

If assaulted, a Christian could ward off blows or even escape from the attacker by temporarily incapacitating him.

A Christian woman threatened with rape should resist to the best of her ability. (*Deut. 22:23-27; g84 2/22 pp. 24-7; w83 3/15 p. 30; g80 7/8 pp. 9-13; g73 4/22 pp. 16-17; w68 6/1 pp. 345-50*)

Screaming is usually one of the best defenses; however, some individuals are unable to scream out of intense fear. (A male or female who is forcibly raped would not be guilty of *por-nei'a*.)

It is not in harmony with the spirit of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 or Isaiah 2:4 for a Christian to learn karate, judo, or other martial arts. (Compare John 13:35; *g75 12/8 pp. 28-9*.)

A brother would be disqualified as an elder, a ministerial servant, or a pioneer if he took up the study of such martial arts and practiced them.

A person publicly advocating such could be dealt with in line with 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15.

As in the case of a person who takes up professional boxing and continues in such a course, he would be expelled from the congregation. (*w*81 7/1 pp. 30-1)

**While the Christian congregation is not in a position to give direction as to all *sexual matters* concerning the marriage bed, individuals may be advised that in their intimate relations, as in all other aspects of Christian life, they need to display kindness, love, and concern for each other. (Eph. 5:28-30; 1 Pet. 3:1, 7)**

Each one should have a hatred for all perverted sexual practices. (Lev. 18:22, 23; Ps. 97:10; Amos 5:15; Rom. 12:9; Eph. 5:3, 10-12; Col. 3:5, 6)

Persons should be urged to act in such a way as to maintain a clean conscience, and the marriage bed should be undefiled. (Heb. 13:4; *w*83 3/15 pp. 27-31)

While perverted practices are wrong, if within a marriage one is involved or has been involved in such, it does not mean that he or she would necessarily lose service privileges.

If such conduct becomes known to the elders, they would need to consider: Is the practice recent or ongoing, or is it something that occurred in the past and is definitely conquered? Is the individual promoting such conduct as a proper life-style? Is his attitude one of remorse? If he is sincerely repentant and the situation is not generally known, it may not be necessary to remove privileges of service.



# Jehovah's People Theocratically Organized for His Name

Jehovah has an earthly household, or organization, to accomplish his work, an organization that appreciates the importance of his name and in every way seeks to honor it. (Acts 15:14; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:4-6) As he did in the case of natural Israel, so today Jehovah brings his people together as an organization. (Ex. 19:5, 6) They are directed by a “faithful steward” appointed to administer organizational matters in accord with God’s will. (Luke 12:42) Ancient Israel served as a pattern of how the worldwide Christian brotherhood of Jehovah’s Witnesses in these last days would be organized as a God-governed people. (Heb. 10:1) It requires an orderly arrangement to gather the “great crowd” out of all nations so that they may declare unitedly: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:9, 10; *rs* pp. 326-8) Today, this involves a “stewardship from God,” an arrangement administered through a “faithful and discreet slave.”—Col. 1:25; Matt. 24:45-47; *it-2* p. 1035.

## Worldwide Organization Is God-Governed

**Jehovah’s Witnesses, a distinct people, are gathered from all nations.**

They are unified as one flock. (John 10:16)

They form an international association of brothers. (1 Pet. 2:17; 5:9)

They have learned to speak the pure language of truth, thereby calling on the name of Jehovah. (Zeph. 3:9, 13)

They recognize God’s authority and his way of doing things. (Deut. 32:4; Isa. 33:22)

**The Christian congregation of anointed ones on earth has been entrusted with a stewardship as God's household, supported by a great crowd of helpers.**

As members of a loving household, they serve together as a cooperative organization.

Local congregations throughout the earth are not organized according to democratic principles but are under God-governed, theocratic control.

**All congregations are directed by Christ Jesus under one stewardship arrangement, or administration. (Heb. 3:6)**

At Ephesians 1:10, "administration" translates the Greek word *oi-ko-no-mi'an*, which basically means "household (organizational) management" of affairs. (*w74* 10/15 pp. 616-17; *it-1* pp. 48-9)

Congregations receive guidance from Jehovah through Jesus Christ, his appointed Administrator. (Heb. 1:1, 2)

As Jehovah's Chief Servant, Jesus sees to it that justice is carried out. (Matt. 12:18)

Jesus ensures that love prevails among all those who follow his steps closely. (John 15:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:21)

## **Holy People Must Be Guided by God-Given Standards**

**All members of the household, as well as those who work closely with it, must be holy. (Eph. 2:19; 1 Pet. 1:14-16)**

Holiness includes cleanness, purity, separateness, both physically and spiritually.

**Jehovah's people must love justice and mercy. (Ps. 33:5; Jas. 2:13; 3:17)**

**As Statute-Giver, Jehovah sets righteous standards and, at times, delegates the authority necessary to enforce them. (Isa. 33:22)**

His laws are stated in our guidebook, the Bible. (2 Tim. 3:16)

We must recognize and submit to this theocratic rulership. (Isa. 2:3)

### **Administration of laws is entrusted to God's anointed King. (Isa. 32:1)**

Since his invisible enthronement in 1914 C.E., Jesus has been ruling in the midst of his earthly enemies. (Ps. 110:2; Dan. 7:13, 14)

Invisible control is exercised from heaven.

Use of a visible earthly agency is evidenced by millions of subjects now submitting to Christ's kingship. (Prov. 14:28a; Phil. 2:9-11)

### **Invisible rule requires visible representatives.**

The anointed remnant has been entrusted with all of the Master's belongings. (Luke 12:42-44)

The steward class is faithful in dispensing spiritual food.

Overseers serve as earthly representatives under the direction of the steward class. (Isa. 32:1, 2)

Theocratic submission requires recognition of this orderly arrangement. (Zech. 8:23)

We are assured of proper guidance through the conclusion of the system of things. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 28:20)

## **Governing in Righteousness Requires Observance of Jehovah's Laws and Principles**

**Laws are defined as rules of conduct that are necessary for good order. (Compare Galatians 6:16.)**

Jehovah is a God of order, and his laws are perfect. (Ps. 19:7; 1 Cor. 14:33)

God's laws are based on righteous principles, and they are enforceable by an organization or an agency.

**Principles are settled guidelines based on fundamental truths. (*w57* 9/1 p. 524; *w52* 7/1 p. 407)**

Example of principles based on a fundamental truth:

Fundamental truth: Jehovah God is the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. (Acts 4:24)

Principles based on this fundamental truth:

We owe Jehovah total obedience in everything. (1 Sam. 15:22; Jer. 7:23)

When there is a conflict, we must obey God as Ruler rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

**Principles are eternal, whereas rules may apply to limited times or conditions.**

**Laws, judicial decisions, and instructions from Jehovah are transmitted through various levels of household (organizational) management. (Eph. 1:10, *Ref. Bi.*, ftn.)**

Jesus Christ, the King and High Priest. (Heb. 3:1, 6)

“The faithful and discreet slave” and its Governing Body and traveling representatives. (Matt. 24:45-47; Acts 15:23, 28, 29; 16:4)

Congregation elders. (Heb. 13:17)

Husbands, fathers, and mothers. (Prov. 1:8; Eph. 5:22, 23; 6:1, 4)

**Human overseers must be careful that their instructions do not violate God’s Word.**

They must imitate Jesus. (John 5:30; 12:49)

If God’s Word is violated, lawlessness results. (2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 3:4)

## **Administering Jehovah’s Laws With Justice and Mercy**

**Justice is the administration of what is right in a fair and impartial way. (Lev. 19:15)**

Jehovah manifests justice in all of his dealings. (Deut. 32:4; Heb. 2:2-4)



Illustration: A plumb line must be carefully used if a building is to be erected properly. (Amos 7:7, 8; compare Zechariah 4:10.)

If any of Jehovah's people do not meet the test of uprightness in a spiritual way, Jehovah will mete out discipline with justice.

Decisions of elders must reflect justice in imitation of Jehovah's ways. (Isa. 32:1)

**Jehovah tempers justice with mercy when this is warranted. (Ezek. 33:14-16)**

**Mercy is not limited to the withholding of measured punishment when justly due; it also expresses kind consideration or pity that brings relief to those who are disadvantaged and in need of help. (*it-2* p. 376)**

Mercy lightens judgment, or punishment, and brings relief when circumstances allow for it. (Ps. 103:8-10; Jas. 2:13)

Mercy also involves the way in which needed correction and discipline are given.

Mercy takes into consideration such matters as motive, provocation, willingness to confess, temptation, mental and emotional condition, degree of spiritual progress made, past conduct, and present attitude of the offender.

Elders must guard against automatic or letter-of-the-law application of punishment for breaking God's laws.

**Administering Christian law in justice and with mercy requires:**

Decisions that are fair and appropriate to the need. (Isa. 28:24-28; *w76* 12/1 p. 719; *w75* 9/1 pp. 517-18)

Applying punishment to fit the violation.

Allowance for mercy when there are extenuating circumstances.

Enforcing with impartiality the laws that carry sanctions. (Deut. 1:16, 17)

Getting all the facts before making a decision. (Prov. 18:13, 17)

Avoiding becoming unnecessarily involved in personal disputes. (Prov. 26:17; see Unit 5 (b), page 108.)

Expelling (by disfellowshipping) those who flout God's household law and unrepentantly contaminate the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:9, 13; Titus 3:10)

Making clear to disfellowshipped ones that upon displaying works befitting repentance and turning around, they may apply for reinstatement. (2 Cor. 2:6-8)

**Each judicial case is different and must be judged on its own merits.**

Some people have inherited or acquired stronger faulty inclinations than others have and may therefore need more than the usual direction or counsel to correct their course. (Jonah 4:11; Mark 6:34)

## **Need for a Righteous Judiciary**

**Elders should make serious efforts to expand their ability to be righteous judges.**

Use direction provided by the Society.

Be sure all decisions are solidly based on the Scriptures.

Before handling any judicial matter, wisely make a practice of carefully reviewing Units 5 (a), 5 (b), and 5 (c), taking special note of the cited scriptures.

When elders rely primarily on past experience or fail to review this material before handling a judicial matter, they frequently overlook important points.

Since the lives of all Christians are precious to Jehovah, the elders cannot afford to be careless or indifferent. You must "render an account." (Heb. 13:17)

**Elders selected to serve on judicial or appeal committees should be outstandingly discerning and trustworthy men.**

If the wrongdoer or one accused is known to have strong feelings respecting an elder being considered to serve, it would be better that the elder not serve.

An elder who is related to the accused person, has been in business with him, or has had a special friendship with him should not normally serve on the committee. (*km* 9/77 p. 6)

The judicial committee needs to be consistent, firm, and loving in its dealings and decisions.

Work interdependently as a committee. (1 Cor. 12: 21-25)

Listen to fellow members on the judicial committee; benefit from one another's observations.

God's spirit can direct any one of the elders to make a valuable contribution to the thinking of the judicial committee. (Prov. 27:17; Eccl. 4:9)

When questions arise, do not be hasty in deciding the matter. Do research in the Society's publications. If answers cannot be found and further direction is really needed, write to the Society; if the matter is urgent, telephone during business hours.

Elders serving as a committee of judges should imitate the example of Jehovah and Jesus, dealing impartially and justly with all persons. (Lev. 19:15; John 5:30; 8:28)

**By your conscientiously exercising justice tempered by mercy, you give evidence that Jehovah's organization is governed by him. His theocratically organized people will therefore continue to grow in righteousness. (1 Sam. 12:22)**



# Under “the Law of the Christ”

“The law of the Christ” is not the body of laws that formed the Mosaic Law of ancient Israel. (Gal. 6:2; Col. 2:13, 14) Since Pentecost 33 C.E., Christians have been “under law toward Christ.” This control is called “the perfect law that belongs to freedom.”—1 Cor. 9:21; Jas. 1:25; *it-2* p. 221.

Jesus did not personally write down a set of laws. Furthermore, his disciples did not set down laws in the form of a code for Christians, using categories and subheadings. Nevertheless, the Christian Greek Scriptures abound in laws, commands, and decrees that the Christian is obligated to observe.

Some rules of conduct in the Law of Moses have been restated in the law of the Christ and are enforceable upon Christians. (Acts 15:19-21) Other rules of conduct from the Law of Moses with their underlying principles, though not enforceable in the Christian congregation, are useful to Christians as they walk in the way of holiness.—Jas. 2:8, 9.

Elders must always seriously consider the guidelines that serve to protect the congregation and keep it clean in Jehovah’s sight. They must also treat God’s flock with tenderness.—Acts 20:28-30; Eph. 5:25-27.

## Law of the Christian Congregation

**Christians are under the law of the Christ, not the Mosaic Law. (1 Cor. 9:21)**

The law of the Christ consists of a body of rules for Christian conduct. (Gal. 6:16)

This law embraces the whole scope of a Christian’s life and work and focuses attention on:

Our relationship with Jehovah. (Matt. 4:10; 22:37; 1 John 5:3)

Our faith in Jesus Christ and submission to him. (Col. 1:18; 1 John 3:23)

Our relationship with fellow Christians. (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 3:16-18)

Our obligations toward unbelievers. (Matt. 24:14; Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14)

Our moral conduct and manner of life. (Gal. 5:23, 24)

**The law of the Christian system of things involves the heart. (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16)**

**For our protection and spiritual security, it is essential that we be obedient to the law of the Christ.**

Only in this manner can those who desire to be guided by Jehovah's Word walk unitedly and harmoniously in the path of righteousness.

This makes it incumbent upon us to lay aside personal or preconceived ideas of what is right and wrong and wholeheartedly accept Jehovah's direction.

In this way, we are kept separate from the world and prove ourselves loyal to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah and his King, Jesus Christ.

## **Elders, Guard Your Trust of Shepherding God's Flock**

**How elders can guard their trust of shepherding God's flock. (1 Pet. 5:1-4; *w*89 9/15 pp. 10-15)**

Be positive and diligent in caring for your duties. (Prov. 10:4)

Maintain a good, productive schedule of personal study. (1 Tim. 4:13-15)

As an elder, you are rightly expected to give sound Scriptural counsel.

Reading the entire Bible meditatively, perhaps several times, will help to equip you for such responsibility. (Prov. 15:28)

“Preach the word,” both inside and outside the congregation. (2 Tim. 4:2, 5)

Work hard to increase your capability as a teacher. (Rom. 12:7; Jas. 3:1)

**Treat God’s flock with tenderness. (Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8; w89 9/15 pp. 15-20)**

Be a humble slave of your fellow Christians, not ‘lording it over them.’ (Matt. 20:25-28; Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 5:3)

Be a source of relief and refreshment. (Isa. 32:1, 2)

Be just, righteous, and tender when judging sheep in God’s flock. (Compare Ezekiel 34:7-14.)

**Serving loyally as an elder under the law of the Christ honors Jehovah and brings many benefits to the congregation, God’s flock.**

May Jehovah and his Son, in effect, tell you: “Well done, good slave!” (Luke 19:17)





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