



## **Course Name: Shepherds/Elders (Meetings)**

By Tommy South

---

### **Course description:**

This discussion centers on a brief discussion about meetings. How often should shepherds/elders meet? When is the best time for them to meet? What should be a part of the discussion in those meetings? These questions and more make up the class/discussion. There is more that could be said, but this will need to be a discussion for the shepherds/elders, and to decide what works best within their context.

### **Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have...**

- A. Examined the meeting structure for shepherds/elders.
- B. Discussed the answers to specific questions identified with the role and work of a shepherd/elder.
- C. Developed a plan to approach their own personal meetings regarding spiritual matters and what that looks like on a regular basis.

### **Outline of the class:**

- A. During the first few minutes of the class divide the class into groups of three or four. Then ask each table to take 15-20 minutes to discuss the following.
  1. Describe the current approach for shepherds/elder's meetings? When, How, What, and Why.
  2. How is the agenda for each meeting established and carried out?
  3. What is the main role of a shepherd/elder?
- B. How often should shepherds meet?
  1. The Bible never mentions anything about shepherds' meetings, so any meeting is optional and at the discretion of the shepherds involved.
  2. How often to meet will depend largely on the purpose(s) of their meetings. A clear distinction should be made between various types of meetings and their purposes.
  3. Most elders' meetings should NOT be "business meetings." If the responsibilities for carrying out the church's ministries have been properly delegated, others will be able to take care of these matters, leaving the shepherds free to focus on their primary God-given responsibility: people (Hebrews 13:17).
  4. Most shepherds will probably want/need to meet at least twice each month (as a minimum), for the purposes of discussing the needs and problems faced by various members, and for spending time in prayer over these.

- a. There should always be a careful watching out for those who have not recently attended in order to know why, as well as staying aware of the status of those who are ill or facing other kinds of problems.
    - b. Shepherds who are paying attention to these matters will have more than enough to occupy their meeting times.
  - 5. It is a good idea to include church staff in at least one of these monthly meetings, since they may know of needs, etc. that need to be brought to the shepherds' attention, and also for discussions of the general direction of the church. However, church staff should not attend all meetings of the elders.
  - 6. For "business meeting" purposes, a quarterly meeting with deacons and/or other ministry leaders should be sufficient. If meetings are held more frequently, they should focus mostly on prayer so that the shepherds are not drawn away from their work to that which should be done by others.
  - 7. Shepherds should always be as available as possible to meet with members who request it.
    - a. It is probably not productive to have an announced time when people are welcome to meet with you, as they may get the idea that this is the only time you are open to meeting with them.
    - b. Also, some will not want to come at a pre-announced time, because they may want privacy and confidentiality, which they would not have if others were there at the same time.
  - 8. All meetings should have....
    - a. An agenda, preferably printed in advance, and
    - b. A chairman to keep the meeting on track. Doing these two things will save much time that will otherwise be wasted drifting from topic to topic or waiting for someone to direct the discussion.
- C. When should shepherds/elders meet?
- 1. Naturally, this will depend largely on their individual schedules.
    - a. Many find that Sunday afternoons are a good time, since they may already be at the building anyway.
    - b. It is possible to meet elsewhere if there is a more convenient location for everyone, but it *must* be where privacy and confidentiality can be maintained.
  - 2. Shepherds should definitely NOT meet during worship times or while others are in classes unless it is an emergency.
    - a. Doing so suggests they are in some way different from others and do not need the regular times of worship and study that other Christians do.
    - b. This practice can be fatal to their credibility as leaders and will inevitably send the wrong message.

3. It will always be the case that some unplanned meetings will need to happen. This is another reason to carefully plan the regular meetings, so that shepherds do not become weighed down with meetings.
- D. What should be the focus of an shepherds/elder's meeting?
1. First, and foremost, should be the spiritual needs within the congregation.
    - a. Are there members who have been absent from the assembly? Waiting six months to have this discussion is too long and will cause those who are absent not to return.
    - b. Are there members who are struggling with temptation and/or sin that need a shepherd to visit, encourage them, and pray with and for them?
    - c. Discuss what steps can be taken to reach these and others who may need a visit to hear the voice of the shepherds. Remember: sheep need to hear the voice of the shepherds...always.
  2. There should be a discussion about how the shepherds/elders can stay better connected to the sheep (members).
    - a. What is being done to stay connected with all the members?
    - b. Develop a plan that can be discussed regularly to know and care for the sheep in better ways.
  3. A constant part of a shepherd/elder's meeting must involve the improvement of communication.
    - a. The number one complaint among congregations is the poor or lack of communication from the leadership.
    - b. The most effective way to communicate with members is face-to-face. There may not always be opportunity to do so but communicating matters of importance to the congregation in the form of announcements, email, texting, bulletins, etc., *for the sake of convenience*, is not effective and it leaves members frustrated and confused. Develop a plan to improve your communication skills to keep every member informed.
    - c. This is not to say that announcements, email, texting, bulletins, etc., should never be used. They have their place, but if you want to connect with and ensure everyone understands the inner workings and decisions of shepherds/elders, then you must talk to each family face to face.
  4. A plan for business matters. All congregations have specific matters of business that must be discussed. Below are a few ideas about how to best address these matters.
    - a. Establish a plan by which business matter are to be handled. Deacons and other ministry leaders can, and should be, entrusted with handling business affairs within the church. This allows shepherds/elders to focus on the spiritual priorities of the congregation.
    - b. A quarterly or bi-annual meeting can be arranged that allows deacons and ministry leaders to visit with the elders related to these business matters.

- c. Obviously, if an emergency happens, a special meeting can be called immediately to address whatever concerns are involved.

**Conclusion:**

- A. Meetings become a natural part within the role of shepherds/elders, even though there is nothing in the Bible said about them. However, there are many matters that require shepherds/elders to meet to make decisions.
- B. When shepherds/elders do meet, the focus must be on the spiritual matters relative to the needs within the congregation. These spiritual matters are the priority in every congregation. This is what makes up the agenda for these meetings.
- C. Sit down and prepare a plan for improving communication between the shepherds/elders and the congregation. List out what can and cannot be communicated, what should and should not be communicated.
- D. Remember, you will not overcommunicate to the congregation. The more informed they are, the less resistance leaders will face.