



Course Name: Shepherds/Elders (Delegating Responsibility)

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Course description:

Most elders/shepherds struggle with the process of delegating responsibility. If not careful, it is easy to fall into the trap of doing the work themselves, rather than delegating it to others. This lesson is a practical study of delegating responsibility from a biblical perspective and how this affects the task before elders/shepherds in leading the church today.

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

- A. Examined the text of Acts 6:1-7 and the practice of delegating responsibility.
- B. Considered the barriers associated with the practice of delegation.
- C. Developed a plan for overcoming those barriers and determined responsibilities that can and should be delegated.

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. What are the consequences of elders/shepherds who cannot delegate responsibility?
 2. Once you have discussed the consequences, list areas of responsibility within the congregation that can and should be delegated.
- B. Acts 6:1-7 Delegating the responsibility of serving the Hellenistic Widows
 1. The early church in Jerusalem was faced with a serious internal problem, ethnically based, and potentially divisive (Note: Food was not the real issue).
 2. The problem was made worse by those who complained.
 3. The apostles turned the task of solving it over to the entire body of believers.
 4. Why did they not take care of it themselves, especially since it was so serious? V. 2 explains: *They had a higher priority that they could not neglect.*
 5. They recognized the potential for distraction from the real work of preaching the word and prayer. They saw that Satan could use this to stop the church's progress by distracting them from their real work.
 6. They realized that others could solve this problem better than they could (i.e., Hellenists pick those to serve, since they were the complainers and better understood the cultural /ethnic sensitivities).
 7. The apostles ratified the decision of the larger body – but *did not make it for them.*

8. The Result: “The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.” – Because they refused to be distracted, the gospel continued to spread, which was the number-one task at hand.
9. The Lesson: Refusal to be distracted – even by an important task – resulted in the church’s mission being accomplished. Otherwise, it would not have been.
****Important: The willingness or refusal of elders to delegate responsibility can be the difference between a *highly effective* eldership and a *dysfunctional* one.**

C. Barriers to Delegation

1. Unwillingness to give up control, especially where money is concerned.
2. The church’s view of elders as primarily “decision-makers,” not as shepherds.
3. Tendency to step in when those given responsibility do not carry it out.
4. Tendency to step in when those given responsibility do not carry it out as *we* would do it.

D. How to overcome these Barriers

1. Recognize that control is not what being a shepherd is about: *Matthew 20:26-28*, *1 Peter 5:3* “Overseeing” does not require controlling.
2. Educate the church: Explain to those who expect elders to make all decisions that others have been given this responsibility and refuse to overreach them. Do not let people drain your time and energy with tasks that can be done by others.
3. Elders should agree among themselves – and remind each other when necessary – that they will *not* become distracted by matters that can and should be handled by others.
4. Organize the work by various areas of responsibility, being specific about who is responsible for each facet of the work/each ministry. Delegate tasks of real importance, not just “busy-work.” Always praise a job well done and give others the opportunity for greater responsibilities.
5. Rather than stepping in when a task is not accomplished, talk with those given responsibility to find out why it is not being carried out. Obstacles? Money? Discouragement? Failure to realize the importance of the task? Recommission them *versus* taking it on yourself. If they still do not get it done, appoint someone else, *but refuse to take on the task yourself*. This is part of “equipping the saints for ministry” (Ephesians 4:11-12).
6. Accept the fact that others may have good ideas also and may do it even better than you would. Utilize the gifts and talents of others. You cannot be an expert in everything.
7. *Allow people to try and to fail. No one has real responsibility if there is no ability to fail.* Some will learn more from their mistakes than from any other method. Do not rob them of this learning opportunity (*Example: Jesus and the 12*).

8. Avoid the pitfall of money control by allotting each ministry its own budget so that questions about expenditures are not continually brought to the elders.
9. If/when elders must get involved in non-shepherding matters, they should be dealt with as simply and quickly as possible, then handed back to those responsible for them. *Do not let them become the agenda!*
10. Remember: There is no virtue in “doing it all yourself.” It takes a mature leader to involve others through delegation.

E. Examples of Responsibilities that Can/Should be Delegated

1. Budget planning
2. Financial decisions (bank accounts, insurance, payroll, etc.)
3. Maintenance of Property
4. Purchasing of Supplies and Equipment
5. Planning Fellowship Activities
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Conclusion:

- A. The practice of delegating responsibility will allow elders/shepherds opportunity to focus on the priority of shepherding the congregation. Go back and review Acts 6:1-7 and the notes shared during the class and consider how this approach can be implemented in delegating responsibility in the congregation.
- B. Remember there are barriers. Take a moment to reflect on these barriers and identify which ones may be the hindrance to delegating responsibility where you are and discuss how you can overcome those barriers.
- C. Add to the list started above related to responsibilities that can and should be delegated. Consider the following questions:
 1. What should be added to this list where you serve?
 2. How will you delegate those areas?
 3. Do others in the congregation need to be trained to serve in these areas?
 4. How can you equip them for this area of service?
- D. Develop a plan for helping someone if they fail in a specific task or in carrying out the responsibility. How will you handle these situations with grace and promote growth?