

CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO ADDITIONAL SHEPHERDS

Introduction

A leader is defined as someone who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people to pursue their God-given directions. As we consider the recognition of shepherds to lead our congregation spiritually, we want to do it three ways:

- Prayerfully – Ask the Spirit to inform our hearts in a period of prayer and fasting.
- Biblically – Follow what the Bible says about shepherds and spiritual leaders.
- Communally – Discuss the selection of additional elders with your brothers and sisters.

As we consider the names to recommend, we should remember that this is not a process to recommend a *potential* leader. Rather, this is a process to *recognize men who already lead*, whose spiritual maturity and leadership skills *have already been demonstrated* in the lives of those they serve.

Some related scriptures

The New Testament uses three different Greek words for an elder or shepherd. The Greek words and their translations in different versions of the Bible are (1) *presbuteros* = elder or presbyter, (2) *episkopos* = bishop or overseer, and (3) *poimen* = shepherd or pastor.

Acts 14:23 (speaking of Paul and Barnabas) – Paul and Barnabas appointed *elders* for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 20:28-32 (Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders) – Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*. Be *shepherds* of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (Paul speaking of gifts given by Christ) – It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be *pastors* and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (Paul telling Timothy about the characteristics of an overseer) – Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an *overseer*, he desires a noble task. Now the *overseer* must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Titus 1:5-9 (Paul's instructions to Titus about appointing elders) – The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint *elders* in every town, as I directed you. An *elder* must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an *overseer* is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless - not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Peter 5:1-3 (Peter's instructions to elders) – To the *elders* among you, I appeal as a fellow *elder*, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be *shepherds* of God's flock that is under your care, serving as *overseers* - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Characteristics of an elder:

The following characteristics of an elder come from these scriptures. Not every elder will necessarily possess all these qualities or have them all to the same degree.

- Shepherd
 - He is already a leader in service to others who respect and follow him in the Lord.
 - His leadership style reflects Jesus' model of leading by example and service.
 - He strives for unity in everything he does.
- Overseer
 - He sees “the big picture” and has an overview of matters affecting the church.
 - He has a vision for the future of the church.
 - He keeps watch and provides protection against false doctrine and sinful behavior.
- Mentor/Equipper
 - He trains and teaches others how to serve.
 - He is a builder of people – an encourager.
 - Others look to him for spiritual direction and instruction.
- Example
 - He leads by example.
 - He is a student of the Bible and a man of prayer.
 - He demonstrates Christian maturity.
 - He has a positive attitude about the Westover Hills church, our values and our mission.
 - He demonstrates a balanced life (family, church, career).
 - His wife provides spiritual support for his ministry.

Additional observations:

- What shepherds should do:
 - Keep watch over the members of the church body.
 - Care for and feed the flock.
 - Give guidance.
 - Preach and teach.
 - Exhort and admonish.
 - Serve the church.
 - Pray over and anoint the sick.
- What shepherds should not do:
 - Order people around.
 - Think for everyone else.
 - Make all of the decisions.
 - Legislate in matters of opinion.
 - Respond only to complaints.
 - Manage buildings, budgets or programs.

- An elder does not need to be:
 - Outstanding in the business world.
 - A good public speaker.
 - A charismatic personality.
 - Wealthy.

While the scriptures should not be considered “checklists,” they do give a profile of the type of man God desires to lead his church spiritually. As you prayerfully consider men that fit the characteristics above, reflect on the following qualities and questions:

<u>Attribute/Quality</u>	<u>Questions</u>
<u>General</u>	
Good role model	Is he an example by his involvement in Christian activities and work? Does his life attract others to Christ and/or encourage those who are Christians? Would you seek him out in a time of crisis for spiritual comfort and guidance?
Wise	In uncertain situations, how sound is his judgment?
Evangelistic	Does he show concern for the lost?
Teaching	Does he have both the knowledge and ability to teach positively and to guard the flock against error?
Generous and caring	Does he help people with their problems, whatever the nature of the problems might be?
Pursues godly activities	Which do you see as the larger interest for him - the Spirit or the flesh? Does his way of life reflect his faith in God?
Holy, devoted to God	Do you see more of Christ in him now than a year ago?
Recognized leader	Does he know the Westover family well enough to lead us? Is he already leading?
<u>Personal</u>	
Good reputation	What do others say about him?
Morally pure	Does his life reflect moral and sexual purity, showing honor to his wife in everything?
Balanced life	How anchored/stable is he?
Communicates well	Are his conversations non-threatening and not defensive?
Moderation	Does he have addictive behavior? Does he overindulge?
Humble	Is he teachable? Does he always have to be in control?
Void of sinful anger	Is he vengeful or bitter? Does he take offense easily?
Not abusive	Is he kind and respectful, even when provoked?
Fair-minded	How considerate is he of others?
Not argumentative or divisive	How contentious is he? Does he strive for win/win scenarios?
Non-materialistic	How well do his spending habits honor God?
Non-prejudiced & fair	Is he equitable and impartial and does he refuse to play favorites?
Disciplined	Are his habits holy or human? What is his “spiritual fitness”?
<u>Family</u>	
Good spouse/parent	What do you see of Christ in how he relates to his wife and how he parents his children?
Family support	Do his wife and children support his spiritual activities?