



BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP RESOURCES

Passing the Baton of Leadership From One Generation to the Next

Biblical Eldership Study

INTRODUCTION

The text Biblical Eldership and workbook Biblical Eldership Study Guide, by Alexander Strauch will provide the primary approach to the study of God's Word on this subject. Each participant should have his own copy. While the workbook is geared toward one-on-one mentoring, you can also adapt it to group study.

This is an intensive study and should not be rushed. The sequential order of the study will follow the 12 chapters of the study guide (which are keyed to specific readings in the textbook). This can be done at a pace of one chapter per week (an aggressive pace) or one chapter every other week (which will take one-half year to complete).

The study can be done in a group setting (with a designated facilitator) or one on one. The mentor or designated facilitator will lead the discussion, selecting which questions and issues to focus the discussion on. We suggest the discussion leader use the Biblical Eldership Mentor's Guide, which is identical to the study guide but provides answers to all the questions as well as helpful ideas for discussion.

Each participant should have his own textbook and workbook.

MEETING FORMAT

- ***90 minutes in length***
- ***15 minutes of prayer***

We suggest praying on your knees. This teaches the men the importance of humble prayer. The length of time depends on the number of men involved.

Pray for each other, God's work in each other's individual lives, personal needs, and concerns of the church.

In order to use this time effectively, we recommend not spending much time requesting prayer (or at least keep requests to a minimum)—simply start praying. The burdens for prayer will surface as the men pray.

- ***Five minutes of memory verse review***

Memorizing scripture is not only beneficial for "shepherds" who need to be "apt" to teach, but also sets a good pattern of life and an example for the congregation.

- **65 minutes of review/interaction**

Each meeting will involve discussing one chapter in the BE workbook. The facilitator's role is to guide the group through the questions and encourage interaction as the group members share their answers, insights and clarifications. One method to encourage participation is to go around the circle and ask each man in turn to read a question and give the answer he has written down. Then ask if anyone has anything to add to the first man's answer. It is important the each man get used to verbally participating. At times the facilitator may need to help the men navigate disagreements – that is OK. Good men sometimes disagree, and it is growing experience for men to learn how to disagree well, in a godly way.

The group will probably not have time to discuss every question in the workbook, so the facilitator needs to be selective, giving attention to those issues for which this group of men requires extra time for discussion.

Finish with a five-minute preview of the next chapter in the workbook. Then close in prayer.

HOMEWORK

The assigned reading in the “textbook” should be done first. This can be found at the beginning of each chapter in the study guide. (The arrangement of the textbook is different than that of the study guide, so your selected readings will at times be scattered throughout the textbook.)

The questions in the study guide chapter should be completed by each man on his own, in writing, before the next session. We recommend they not leave this to the night before, but begin early in the interval between sessions. This has the following benefits:

- By working on the material ahead of time, the individuals in the group will have had adequate time to ponder the questions deeply.
- A pen or pencil is a marvelous “mental crowbar” that forces people to think! It is an antidote to lazy study habits.
- The discipline of writing down the answers will encourage men to summarize and crystalize their thoughts concretely. Elders need to be able to think things through and then to communicate their findings concretely. So this homework is an exercise in developing clear thinking.
- Time will not be wasted during the monthly meetings while men try to “figure out” or remember their answers. They will already have wrestled with the issues, and the written answers will refresh their memories.
- Observing (even at a distance) their workbooks during the discussion times will help you determine who is taking this training seriously, by whether they have done the work.
- Seeing other men's answers written out will encourage a camaraderie and sense of accountability for each of the men.

(cont.)

We cannot stress enough the importance of the homework—this is core to the learning process:

- The meetings serve as accountability and framework for progressing through the material, and give opportunity to learn from one another and from the wisdom and experience of the facilitators. But the bulk of the learning comes from the individual's personal wrestling with the material.
- This part of the shepherd training is mostly cognitive. God can use this material, however, as a spiritual tool to bring about not only much self-inspection, but also a challenge to godly manhood to which spiritually-minded men will aspire.

The first session:

- The first session is really a pre-session and does not count toward the 12 sessions. This will serve as an introduction to the study.
- Begin with prayer as described above.
- The facilitator should ask an initial question, like "What do you hope to get out of this study?"
- Hand out the books; give an overview of the topics of the study.

Go through the first part of the lesson in the study guide together. Obviously, the participants will not have read the assigning pages in the textbook, but the purpose here is to simply get them into the study itself. Read each question and have them take a moment to write their answer in the study guide. Then discuss their answers. Do a few questions so they can get the feel for what is involved and expected. Emphasize that they write their answers. They will complete the rest of the lesson on their own before the next session.