

Preparation for the session

- Find your church constitution, bylaws, handbook, or position descriptions. Examine your church structure as it outlines the position of an elder. Specifically, identify how many elders your constitution allows or calls for. Ask yourself if it is enough to effectively manage the spiritual care of a congregation your size. Also, consider what avenues your structure has for working with ladies, specifically the visitation of single ladies. Ask yourself if your system is one that is comfortable for women in today's modern gender-relational climate.
- Have on hand the tools that you would normally use in elder work/visitation: your Bible, your catechism, your hymnal, and any other materials that you have found valuable.
- Ask your pastor to bring along any of the materials or books he has used in his work with missing members.



WATCH CHAPTER 5: OPENING DEVOTION

- Someone responds with prayer, asking God's blessing upon the meeting.



WATCH CHAPTER 5, PART 1: "THE GOAL AND TOOLS: THE GOAL"

As you watch, consider the following questions.

- What are *not* the goals of elder work? What is the goal of elder work?
- Where in the Rite of Baptism is your responsibility as an elder summarized?

Worship Is Important!

- State in your own words why corporate worship—the saints gathering together around the Word and sacrament—is important. Then, in your own words list some reasons a congregation will miss those who are absent from worship.

- Write down a possible verbal conversation with someone who has been absent from worship. How would you explain to them why they are missed?



WATCH CHAPTER 5, PART 2: “THE GOAL AND TOOLS: THE TOOLS”

- In the parable of the fig tree, the caretaker of the vineyard asked the owner to be given “one more year” to work with a tree that was not producing fruit. How does that stress the needed patience of elder work? How does it stress the need for a schedule/system?
- The encouragement was provided for leaders to be regulars in both worship and Bible study. List some reasons that is vital for elders.



WATCH CHAPTER 5, PART 3: “THE GOAL AND TOOLS: PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS”

As you watch the video, jot down important points as each of the suggestions offered. Why are these suggestions so vital to good elder work? After the video, discuss your notes.

- Each case is different —
- Build relationships —
- Be yourself —
- Open heart and open mind —
- Listen, listen, listen! —



FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. One of the hinderances to elder work is the overwhelming scope for which elders have been asked to give volunteer labor. A congregation of 300 communicant members with an elder board restricted constitutionally to five men is asking those men to care for up to 60 members each. That's the size of some mission congregations! Exasperated elders may look at the list of people assigned to their care and not know where to begin.
 - a. Examine your constitution, bylaws, handbook, or position descriptions to see the regulations concerning the number of elders at your congregation.
 - b. Ask yourself if there are ways you can expand your board of elders to include other men who are capable, biblically qualified, and willing to be elders. An expanded group of elders will help shrink those assigned to an elder's care to a manageable size.
 - c. Examine whether your church structure allows for men to serve as elders and on other boards and committees. If not, consider changing your church structure to allow for such dual roles.
 - d. Consider an additional position for an expanded group of elders that would concentrate on the care and visitation of members, without requiring time-consuming business meetings.
2. As you read your Bible, glance through your catechism, or use your hymnal, begin to mark those places you would find valuable sharing with missing members.



WATCH CHAPTER 5: CLOSING DEVOTION

- Someone closes with prayer.