

Session 1: God the Shepherd's Call For Under-Shepherds

- Introduction: Mt 16: The Nature And Mission of the Church and call for Shepherd Leaders
- The Shepherd Leader by Timothy Witmer (chapters 1-3)
 - Handout: Acts 20ff, Shepherd Leadership in Succession
- The Steward Leader by Timothy Keller
 - Discerning A Call To Elder/WLB

I. Consideration as to the seriousness of its spiritual vocation

BCO 8.1-3,9

8-1. This office is one of dignity and usefulness. The man who fills it has in Scripture different titles expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed *bishop* or *pastor*. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent, an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he is termed *presbyter* or *elder*. As he expounds the Word, and by sound doctrine both exhorts and convinces the gainsayer, he is termed *teacher*. These titles do not indicate different grades of office, but all describe one and the same office.

8-2. He that fills this office should possess a competency of human learning and be blameless in life, sound in the faith and apt to teach. He should exhibit a sobriety and holiness of life becoming the Gospel. He should rule his own house well and should have a good report of them that are outside the Church.

8-3. It belongs to those in the office of elder, both severally and jointly, to watch diligently over the flock committed to his charge, that no corruption of doctrine or of morals enter therein. They must exercise government and discipline, and take oversight not only of the spiritual interests of the particular church, but also the Church generally when called thereunto. They should visit the people at their homes, especially the sick. They should instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourner, nourish and guard the children of the Church. They should set a worthy example to the flock entrusted to their care by their zeal to evangelize the unconverted and make disciples. All those duties which private Christians are bound to discharge by the law of love are especially incumbent upon them by divine vocation, and are to be discharged as official duties. They should pray with and for the people, being careful and diligent in seeking the fruit of the preached Word among the flock.

II. Training:

(1st 3 Preferably Prior to #4 "Shepherd Leader Training")

- 1) Completed Servant Leader Training (or approved equivalent)
- 2) Completed Confessional Theology Class (2 Semester) (or approved equivalent)
- 3) Currently a Key Leader in the Church (teacher, small grp facilitator, SLB member, other?)
- 4) CPC Shepherd Leadership Training (no approved equivalent)

III. Three Concurrent "Tests" (BCO 16.1-3) (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1)

16-1. Ordinary vocation to office in the Church is the calling of God by the Spirit, through the inward testimony of a good conscience, the manifest approbation of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a lawful court of the Church.

1. Self-Examination (Inward Testimony)

See training as much of an opportunity for self-examination as it is preparation.

2. Congregational Affirmation: (Outward Testimony)

Authentication Affirmation of God's People

16-2. The government of the Church is by officers gifted to represent Christ, and the right of God's people to recognize by election to office those so gifted is inalienable. Therefore no man can be placed over a church in any office without the election, or at least the consent of that church.

BCO 24-1. Every church shall elect persons to the offices of ruling elder and deacon in the following manner: At such times as determined by the Session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the Session... who meets the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

III. Confirmed by Session Examination:

16-3. Upon those whom God calls to bear office in His Church He bestows suitable gifts for the discharge of their various duties. And it is indispensable that, besides possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, every one admitted to an office should be sound in the faith, and his life be according to godliness. Wherefore every candidate for office is to be approved by the court by which he is to be ordained.

BCO 24-1. ...Each nominee shall then be examined in:

- a. Christian experience, especially his personal character and family management (based on the qualifications set out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9),
 - b. knowledge of the system of doctrine, government, discipline contained in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*BCO* Preface III, *The Constitution Defined*),
 - c. the duties of the office to which he has been nominated, and
 - d. willingness to give assent to the questions required for ordination. (*BCO* 24-5)
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- 1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as originally given, to be the inerrant Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - 2) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the *Confession of Faith* and the *Catechisms* of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures; and do you further promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the fundamentals of this system of doctrine,

you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Session the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?

- 3) Do you approve of the form of government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in America, in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity?
- 4) Do you accept the office of ruling elder (or deacon, as the case may be) in this church, and promise faithfully to perform all the duties thereof, and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your life, and to set a worthy example before the Church of which God has made you an officer?
- 5) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?