

CIRCUIT OVERSEER MEETS WITH ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS PROGRAM FROM SEPTEMBER 2013 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2014

Note to the circuit overseer:

Warmly express appreciation for all that the appointed men are doing in caring for the needs of the congregation. Mention specific areas in which you have observed that the brothers are doing well in using thinking ability. The tone of the meeting should be loving and positive (*tg* 21:11)

Theme: Develop Thinking Ability as Appointed Men (Pr 3:21)

INTRODUCTION (1 min.)

For us as appointed men to successfully guide, counsel, and shepherd the flock, it is essential for us to develop thinking ability that is based on God's Word and on direction from "the faithful and discreet slave" (Mt 24:45) [**Read Proverbs 3:21**]

Thinking ability includes taking into account the long-term as well as the immediate consequences of our actions (*w02* 8/15 21)

How can we use thinking ability when making decisions as family heads and in the congregation?

USE THINKING ABILITY WHEN MAKING DECISIONS (9 min.)

We live in an age of instant gratification; important decisions are often made quickly and without much forethought

It is vital that an appointed man's decisions reflect sound thinking ability [**Read Hebrews 13:7**]

Our decisions can affect the congregation for good or for bad (2Chr 10:13-15; 13:6, 7; Heb 11:7)

Before making important decisions, use thinking ability

Give thought to sobering questions (Pr 15:28)

Consider God's Word, and research Christian publications (Pr 2:1-5)

How would thinking ability help in the following scenarios?

Situation: An appointed brother contemplates employment that will require him to miss several meetings a month and that will curtail his preaching activity

Question: What should he take into account? [Could I handle a meeting part on regular meeting attendance and participation in the field ministry with a clear conscience? Would I be putting Kingdom interests first? (Mt 6:19-21) Could my decision create a lax attitude toward regular meeting attendance and the field ministry for my family and the congregation?]

Thinking ability will enable appointed men to make good decisions worthy of imitation (1Co 11:1)

USE THINKING ABILITY AS A FAMILY HEAD (9 min.)

God-fearing men desire to help their family develop thinking ability (Pr 4:5)

When children are involved, a husband and wife must cooperate to be successful (Pr 6:20-22)

Question: Why is it important for a family head to help his family develop thinking ability in how they use computers or electronic devices?

[The family is protected by developing heartfelt compliance with godly counsel (*w13* 1/15 17-18 pars. 3-6; *g* 1/11 27, box)]

Situation: A father notices his teenage child is developing a questionable friendship through electronic media

Question: What steps could he take to help his child develop thinking ability in such matters? [Reason with the brothers on suggestions made in April 15, 2013, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 15, paragraph 15]

When a brother helps his family to develop thinking ability, they are protected from spiritual harm and the family relationship is strengthened

A family that demonstrates godly wisdom in making decisions is a reflection of the husband's thinking ability (Jas 3:13, 17, 18)

USE THINKING ABILITY IN THE CONGREGATION (9 min.)

Jesus was outstanding in the demonstration of thinking ability and in helping his disciples to do similarly (*cf* 52 par. 13)

Rather than making decisions for them, he used questions to stimulate their thinking and to train them [**Read Matthew 17:24-26**] (*cf* 111-112 pars. 8-9)

Such reasoning touched the heart of his listeners and refreshed them (Mt 11:28)

When brothers approach us with needs and concerns, use thinking ability to assist them

Congregation publishers also need to develop their thinking ability

Use questions and Scriptural principles to guide their thinking

Some of our brothers are plagued with mental and emotional distress (*w88* 11/15 21-24)

Question: What can help us to be kind in dealing with such ones?

[No matter what their concerns, they need “fellow feeling,” not criticism. (1Pe 3:8) Use appropriate points from the June 15, 2013, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 29-31]

When appointed men and publishers use thinking ability, the congregation is strengthened

CONCLUSION (2 min.)

Use thinking ability to be “full-grown in powers of understanding” (1Co 14:20)

Make time each day to read and meditate on God’s Word (Ps 1:2)

Protect your family by weekly family worship

Give counsel that is solidly based on God’s Word (Heb 4:12)

[**Read Proverbs 3:21, 22**]

Eternal blessings are the result of developing thinking ability

[**At this point, the ministerial servants should be dismissed.** Thereafter, consider with the elders the following information and any other necessary matters needing attention]

CHARITABLE PLANNING BROCHURE (1 min.)

[Remind the elders that a few copies of the brochure *Charitable Planning to Benefit Kingdom Service Worldwide* should be retained in the congregation file and should be provided to publishers upon request. If additional copies are needed, they can be requested from the branch office in the same manner that other literature is requested. The requested brochures will be sent in the next regularly scheduled literature shipment]

SHOWING CONSIDERATION FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THEOCRATIC PROJECTS (4 min.)

[Review with the elders the March 17, 2013, letter to all bodies of elders regarding showing consideration for those involved in theocratic projects. Help them to show reasonableness in what they expect of pioneers and other brothers and sisters participating in the activities mentioned in the letter, and commend the elders if they are already doing so. If Bethel family members are assigned to the congregation, encourage the elders to be considerate when these brothers are assigned to be away from the congregation for theocratic responsibilities]

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM PREDATORS (2 min.)

[Read aloud paragraph 13 of the October 1, 2012, letter to all bodies of elders regarding child abuse. Thereafter, state the following: “Is there anyone associated with your congregation (whether listed on a sex offender registry or not) who is a known child molester and who fits the definition of a predator as described in paragraph 13? A predator is defined as ‘one who clearly lacks self-control and by his actions provides reason to believe he will continue to prey on children.’ If so, please arrange for two elders promptly to call the Service Department.” If the elders have further questions about specific individuals, please direct them to have two elders call the Service Department]

JUDGING WITH INSIGHT

[This section of the outline is a review of the video *Judging With Insight* originally shown at the Kingdom Ministry School during the 2013 service year. Stop the video at each **PAUSE** **||**. Each pause is numbered to correspond with the proper place in this outline. After each pause, follow the instructions in the outline. **Once an elder gives the correct answer to a question, please move on to the next point rather than making unnecessary statements. Allow the main points to stand out.** It would be good to have someone assist you in operating the equipment while you handle the information in the outline. You should view the video several times to get well-acquainted with its content]

The Governing Body has asked us to review the video *Judging With Insight* originally shown at the Kingdom Ministry School during the 2013 service year. As was done during the school, we will watch a portion and then stop it and discuss what we learned from the presentation

PART 1—HANDLING A CONFESSION OF WRONGDOING (15 min.)

<<START VIDEO>>

[10-minute segment]

|| 1 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

In this first part of the video, we have focused on three areas:

- (1) Listening to the confession of a wrongdoer
- (2) Selecting the judicial committee and chairman
- (3) Inviting the wrongdoer to the judicial hearing

This covers portions of chapters 5 and 6 of our *Shepherding* textbook

We will now view some brief video clips to isolate specific lessons in these two chapters of the textbook

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

|| 2 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: If an elder anticipates that a publisher may confess serious wrongdoing, why should he ask another elder to join him?

Answer: Although one elder is doubtless a credible witness, there must be two witnesses to an oral confession. At times, a person confesses only to one elder and then disappears. In such a case, if only one person heard the confession, the case cannot be handled judicially (*ks10* 5:37, first bullet point)

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

|| 3 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

It can be helpful to suggest that the wrongdoer do some specific reading in advance of the judicial hearing. If the person reads the material, his reaction to it may provide some indication of his heart being ready to be molded. Part of our counsel and encouragement for the wrongdoer could be based on the material that he has already read in advance

The next series of video clips focuses on the selection of the judicial committee by the body of elders

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|| 4 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: Should the coordinator of the body of elders have waited for Jerry and Doug to return from their Regional Building Committee assignment before forming the judicial committee?

Answer: If a judicial committee is needed, the elders who are present at the Kingdom Hall should determine which elders will serve on the committee and which one will be chairman. (*ks10* 6:1)

Of course, this is true if there are a large number of elders on the body. However, if there are just a few elders available to meet right away, it would be better to wait a day or two to meet so that there are enough elders to give balanced input into the selection of the judicial committee. If there are not enough qualified elders to serve, it might be necessary to enlist the assistance of an elder from a nearby congregation (*ks10* 6:2)

In the next video clip, note the enthusiasm of the young elder when asked who could serve on the judicial committee

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|| 5 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: Should a brother serve on a judicial committee solely because he is available?

Answer: Availability is good, but most important is that those serving on judicial committees are the best qualified to handle the particular case (*ks10* 6:1)

In the next video clip, you will see Brother Tom Jordan. He was in Robby's family pictures shown at the beginning of the video. He has been a friend of the family for many years. In this clip, the coordinator of the body of elders asks Brother Jordan whether he could serve on the committee. Note Brother Jordan's reaction

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

|| 6 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: How was Brother Jordan showing modesty by his response?

For the sake of the accused, having an elder on the committee whom he knows well and respects can have a positive effect; however, an elder who has a special friendship with the accused would normally not serve on the committee (*ks10* 6:2; *km* 9/77 6 par. 40)

When the body of elders meets together to select members of a judicial committee, it is wise to open and close this meeting with prayer because of the seriousness of the matter and the importance of receiving God's holy spirit (Jas 1:5)

The body of elders determines who will serve on a judicial committee and who will serve as chairman (*ks10* 6:1)

The body of elders' choice of chairman is not simply based on age. Other factors are involved.

The video illustrates that careful thought is necessary when deciding who is best qualified to serve as chairman of a judicial committee

Question: What did the coordinator of the body of elders remind the judicial committee to do before handling the case?

Answer: Review chapters 5-7 of the *Shepherding* textbook (*ks10* 6:3)

Let us take note of the next scene

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

|| 7 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

The point of this brief scene is highlighted in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 6, paragraph 6 [Read the three bullet points in that paragraph]

These three things should be made clear when inviting the wrongdoer to the judicial hearing

PART 2—PREPARING FOR THE JUDICIAL HEARING (10 min.)

We now have an opportunity to watch a judicial committee in progress. It is not portraying a 'perfect' committee. Let us keep in mind that what we say to one person might not be exactly what we would say to another because of a number of factors. Let us see what we can learn from the video

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

[8-minute segment]

|| 8 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

The section of the video just viewed covers portions of chapter 7 of the *Shepherding* textbook. Once again, we would like to show brief video clips to isolate some specific lessons

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

|| 9 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: Why is it good for the judicial committee to meet beforehand?

Answer: This meeting is not a “group review” of chapters 5-7 of the *Shepherding* textbook. Elders should already have reviewed that material on their own. However, it is best if the committee can meet prior to the judicial hearing to be sure that they are well-organized and know their approach. (1Co 14:40; Ga 5:25) This meeting should be opened with prayer. Discernment must be used when selecting Scriptural examples to share during a judicial hearing

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|| 10 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Robby’s parents did not attend the judicial hearing because he is not a minor

PART 3—CONDUCTING THE JUDICIAL HEARING (26 min.)

Let us see what transpires as the elders further explore the circumstances of the case

<<PLAY VIDEO>>

[22-minute segment]

|| 11 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

A turning point came in the case when the elders asked more leading questions

Question: In the video, Brother Sharp asked Robby, “Have you prayed to [Jehovah], asking for his forgiveness?” What would have been a better way to phrase this question, and why?

Answer: A more discerning question might be, ‘What have you done to repair your relationship with God?’ This question allows the wrongdoer to reveal what is really in his heart. In the next video clip, take note of a tendency that might exist with some brothers on judicial committees

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|| 12 <<PAUSE VIDEO>>

Question: When the accused is asked a question, why is it best to wait for a response, even if the response is not quick in coming?

Answer: Often a long pause after a question causes the person to mull over his reasoning. The conscience can not only excuse us but also accuse us. (Ro 2:15)

Elders should also try to avoid interrupting one another

Question: What might have happened if the other elders had been swayed by Brother Elderman’s initial leanings of sentimentality?

Answer: It could have led to retaining a contaminating influence in the congregation (*ks10* 1:8). It is necessary for us to review this material each time we serve on a judicial committee instead of relying on what we have read in the past

Question: What information should be shared with someone after being told of the decision to dis-fellowship?

Answer: Information outlining the steps for reinstatement and informing him that he could appeal in writing within seven days if he felt there was a serious error in judgment (*ks10* 7:27). The judicial committee will conclude this meeting with prayer only after dismissing the wrongdoer (*ks10* 7:28)

The demeanor and comportment of elders when dealing with a wrongdoer should always be kind and understanding, even when it is clear that he has been deceptive and that there is no evidence of repentance. If we were to let our emotions or frustrations show through, it could adversely af-

fect the accused during the hearing. It could also cause him to become negative toward the elders instead of focusing on what he needs to do to repair his relationship with Jehovah. If the decision is to disfellowship, inappropriate responses by the elders during the hearing could make it more difficult for the person to return to the congregation later

CONCLUSION (2 min.)

Serving on a judicial committee is a weighty responsibility

You are judging for Jehovah (2Ch 19:6)

Thus, you are accountable to him for the judgment you render (2Ch 19:7)

The decision of the judicial committee will likely have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences for the individual involved, his Christian family members, and others in the congregation

With Jehovah's help, you can render good judgment (Mt 18:18-20)

Pray for wisdom, discernment, and God's holy spirit (1Ki 3:9; Php 1: 9, 10)

Do thorough research using Bible-based publications

Do not rely solely on past experience when handling judicial matters (Pr 15:28)

Judge with insight, and prove to be a blessing to God's precious flock (1Pe 5:2)