

Coach's Corner

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“The Need Elders Have For Training”

With this issue of **Coach's Corner** we bring our discussion of eldership to a close. I don't know about you men, but I have been reminded once again just how big the ministry of an elder is as I have put together these eight issues on the subject. One of the ways this is true has to do with the diversity of ministry to which elders are called. As we saw last month, we are given three primary ministries:

- Prayer and the ministry of the Word
- Shepherding
- Discipleship And Delegation

When you break down what each of these areas involves, as we did in that January issue, it is easy to agree that each of us as elders need ongoing training. Let's highlight some of the ways this should happen.

Training Prior To Becoming An Elder

The sense of the elder qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-10 is that there are a number of things which must be true of an elder before he becomes an elder, not the least of which is an ability to teach and to oversee (shepherd and disciple) others. This suggests that we are on the right track to provide men's leadership training in our church (the *Stratego*i group), some of whom may be future elders. We must remain committed to raising up male leaders in the church who display elder qualifications and skills prior to becoming an elder.

Self-Training

An elder/overseer must be “sober-minded” and “self-controlled” (1 Tim. 3:2). This fits with what Paul says a chapter later when he writes, “train yourself for godliness.” We must continually work out so that the word of Christ can dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16) and we can follow God carefully and fruitfully—as well as direct others to do the same. We cannot accomplish this and cannot make solid decisions on the board, unless we are continually growing and continually training for godliness.

This is why we ask each elder to meet with me once a month for a coaching and input time and also ask each elder to read at least four books a year to further his growth and ministry skills—in addition to a regular quiet time. As pastors or shepherds of the church, this continual self-training is the handmaiden of our wisdom, insight, and creative Christ-like leading.

Along this line, let me make a recommendation. A great book you might want to read sometime is Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch. This is a more in-depth study of what the Bible teaches about eldership than what we have covered in our **Coach's Corner** discussion.

Training Opportunities Outside The Church

One of the means of training I would like to make available for us is to let you know about conferences where you can gain rich biblical and practical teaching. Each February the Midwest District of the EFCA has its district conference, a two day event. Though it is in Wichita this year, it is in Nebraska—usually along the I-80 corridor—2/3 years. These conferences always have very practical workshops for leaders.

Next spring (April 13-15, 2010) there will be a conference called “Together For The Gospel” in Louisville, Ky. There will most likely be some men from the church attending this. Let me know if you would like more information. Throughout the year there will also be some training opportunities in Nebraska. I know that none of us can go to all of them, but if each of us can occasionally attend something, it will greatly enhance our ministry as elders.

Next month we will begin talking about conflict resolution in the church in our **Coach's Corner**. After that we will head into other topics which will help encourage and equip us for our ministry. If any of you have any topics you would like to have covered, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Joyfully pastoring and overseeing the flock with you,

Tom