

Am I Called to Serve as an Elder? *(Is This the Right Time?)*

Serving as an elder is a noble task and tending to the flock of God, willingly, providing oversight, is a high calling (1 Tim 3.1; 1 Peter 5.2). Serving as an elder can be both a joyful and challenging experience requiring endurance and often, great sacrifice. God in partnership with the local congregation chooses a shepherd by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20.28). The shepherd's role before God is that of being a weight bearer—of caring for God's people in good and bad times. Serving in this way, however, does not require designation as an "elder" in the congregation. Being a shepherd can take a toll on you, spiritually, emotionally, physically and within your own family. It is the tension between the joy and stress which likely causes Paul to say, "the elder must desire or aspire this noble task (1 Tim 3:1).

The following is intended as a personal discernment guide to assist you in a time of self-assessment. It is not exhaustive or scientific and **should be used in conjunction with prayer as the Holy Spirit leads you.** This is a tool for a couple to discern the call of a local congregation to serve. *The elder and spouse should complete the self-assessment independently* with the spouse providing their perception of the elder's service.

The most important outcome of this self-assessment is reflection and conversation—between the couple and trusted godly advisors, hopefully including the congregation's current elder couples (Individually and/or as a group). Some may consider a balance of their responses; others might consider one question as the deciding factor causing them to accept or not accept the call to serve as an elder in this season of life.

REFLECTIONS:

My primary motivation for serving as an elder at this time is:

The things I appreciate about this congregation include:

My history with this congregation regarding involvement, service and care is:

My vision for the congregation is:

My greatest concerns for the congregation include:



CAPACITIES	REALITY CHECK				
PERSONAL (in my inmost being...)	never	not now	seldom	mostly	always
Desire: I have a desire to serve as an elder					
Time: I have time to oversee, shepherd and participate in the elder group					
Energy: I have physical, mental and emotional energy to be fully present					
Relevance: I am willing to act on/engage contemporary challenges and dialogue					
Growth: I am actively engaged in spiritual reading/reflection/sharing my story/faith					
Family: I have support from my spouse and family and am able to meet my own family needs					
Pastoral: I am involved with people who continue to seek my counsel/support					
Health: I am in good health physically and am not hindered in my ability to serve					
Emotional: I keep negative emotions in check (resentment, bitterness, anger, etc.)					
Sabbatical: I can make time for rest and solitude without experiencing feelings of guilt					

ELDER GROUP					
(in relationship to the other elders...)	never	not now	seldom	mostly	always
Theology: I am able to articulate a Biblical interpretation without judging others					
Role: I am aware of how my behaviors and actions affect others					
Gifts: I utilize my gifts to bless others					
Conflict: I experience conflict as an opportunity for growth					
Change: I welcome change as essential to growth and maturity					
Adaptable: I respect that each elder brings unique gifts to the elder group					

GOING DEEPER

(highlight your previous responses of "never", "not now", and "seldom")

1. Compare your responses to your spouse's responses. Talk about differences. Listen well.
2. What themes emerge from your individual responses?
3. What trends do you experience in your service? (i.e., joy, frustration, resentment, anger, etc.)
4. What are the essential changes I am *for* or *against*? (i.e., biblical/theological, vision, ministries, etc.)

How do these align with the current elder group?

5. Who can help me discern whether I should serve? (It might be helpful in this time of discernment to choose three other couples for prayer and conversation.)

The NEXT STEP I MUST TAKE IS: