

Shall I Continue as an Elder? (Is it Time to Step Away?)

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 whether to step away from serving as an elder at this time. *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 step away from serving as an elder at this time.

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 am steadfast in the desire to serve.					
Tenure: Have I thought about when might be the best time for me to step away from the eldership?					
Time: I have and use my time to oversee, shepherd and participate in elder group.					
Energy: I have and use physical, mental and emotional energy to be fully present.					
Relevance: I am willing to engage contemporary challenges and dialog and act on them as appropriate.					
Growth: I regularly and consistently engage in spiritual reading and reflection.?					
Family: I have support from my spouse and family because I attend to my own family's 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 have or will consider the option of taking a sabbatical to continue to serve.					

ELDER GROUP					
(in relationship to the other elders...)	never	not now	seldom	mostly	always
Theology: I am able to articulate a position or conviction using careful biblical reasoning.					
I am able to respect the positions/convictions of others without judgment.					
Personality: I am aware of how my personality impacts others (positive & negative).					
Gifts: I am aware of my gifts and seek to bless others by using them.					
I am able to shepherd according to my gifts.					
Conflict: I avoid conflict internalizing it with frequent anxiety.					
I have the energy to face conflict with adequate resilience.					
Change: I refrain from over advocacy or forcing my own agenda.					
I refrain from a predominantly oppositional or obstructing attitude.					

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.)
5. With whom do I have conflict? What is the conversation I am avoiding? How am I contributing to the conflict?
6. Who can help me discern whether I continue to serve?
7. What word or words best describe your feelings when you leave most elder's meetings?

The NEXT STEP I MUST TAKE IS:

