

Encouraging Healthy Stewardship in Ministry

Elder Accountability Workgroup
March 2020 Conference – Phoenix, AZ

Overview of Presentation

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2. Awareness of the Need
3. Overview of Suggested Approach
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Elder Accountability Workgroup

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Goals and Objectives of this Effort

Goals and Objectives

Encourage awareness that ...

- All belongs to God ... wives, families, the church, etc.
- Elders are **stewards** of what belongs to God.

Acknowledge the demands of elder stewardship are real, significant, and in tension with one another.

Promote healthy stewardship by elders of the things given into their care.

Promote the spiritual, emotional, and relational health and accountability of elders and the church.

Titus 1:7, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God..."

Awareness of the Need

A Few Scriptures

- **1 Peter 5:8-9**, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith ...”
- **1 John 2:16**, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ...”
- **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ...”

When in a Weakened State, We Become More Vulnerable To:

Drift Toward Spiritual Disconnection: So busy **doing** that your relationship with Christ suffers or becomes distant.

Moral Failure: Sin, of any kind, can harm or diminish ministry effectiveness.

Leadership Avoidance: Avoiding conflict and/or not addressing problematic issues in the congregation. More reactive and less proactive.

When in a Weakened State, We Become More Vulnerable To: (Cont'd)

Presenteeism: Just showing up but not productive; keeping your head above water; ministry becomes a burden rather than a blessing ...

Marital and Family Disconnection: Marital and family strain is both painful and also makes it difficult to feel grounded/settled as we minister.

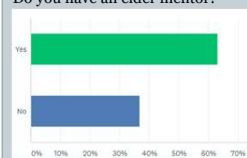
Survey

Survey of Elders and Ordained Deacons Ordained After August 2014

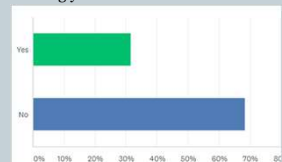
- The effort toward mentoring for elders is not new
- At August 2014 conference, there was discussion about benefits of setting up mentors for newly ordained elders/ordained deacons
- It was suggested that the elders involved in the new elder search be involved in finding mentors for the new elder.
- Purpose of the survey was to better understand what has actually been happening since that time.
- Survey contained 6 questions with opportunity to submit comments.

Survey Results

Do you have an elder mentor?

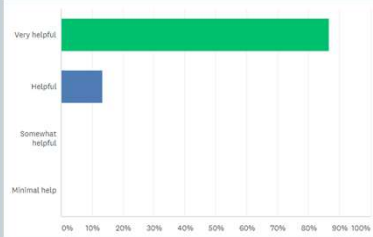


Were the elders involved in your selection process instrumental in finding you a mentor?



Survey Results

If you have received mentoring, has this effort been helpful to you?



Some Observations...

- Helpful mentoring is happening, but not necessarily a part of the elder / deacon process.
- Mentors and mentoring seems to be more natural and less intentional.
- There does not seem to be clarity about the difference between role/tactical mentoring and personal/coping mentoring
- New elders generally rely on the previous elder for role mentoring. Deacons rely on the elder they are serving under.

Overview of Suggested Approach

High Level of Suggested Approach

• Focus on Key Areas for Intervention

- We brainstormed potential pitfalls observed in ourselves and others and reviewed the findings of other groups who have researched pastoral burnout and moral failure.
- Our goal is not to create a program that is all-encompassing. Rather, we tried to identify the 20% that can lead to 80% of the beneficial impact (i.e., Pareto Principle).
- We narrowed the findings down to three broad categories areas for intervention: Personal Stewardship, Marital and Family, and Leadership Responsibility.

• A Growth-Focused Approach is Preferred

- We believe that a stewardship approach that encourages us all to pursue God's design, wellness, and vitality for our lives is better than an approach that focuses solely on the avoidance of sin (although that is certainly a desired outcome).

• Scope

- We believe that this approach should start with the elders and wives, but that the information should be disseminated out to all ministers and wives over time.
- We suggest including ordained deacons and wives as early as possible.

High Level of Suggested Approach

• Assessment and Recommendations

- Our desire is to be able to distribute self-assessments to the elders and wives that will help them have an idea of how they are doing in each area and to foster discussion.
- Best practices as well as ideas and options for addressing various levels of challenges or problems in these areas will be provided over time.
- Mentoring relationships will also be a key place for this information to be discussed.

• Ongoing process of education and discussion

- We suggest that Elder Accountability topics be integrated into our present cycle of meetings and gatherings.
- When possible, having the elders and wives learn together is desirable.

3 Key Categories

3 Key Categories Snapshot

1. Personal Stewardship

- Stewarding the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual aspects of one's life as a foundational part of being in ministry.
- #### 2. Marriage & Family
- Stewarding one's marriage and family relationships in a way that prioritizes those connections and adequately meets needs.
- #### 3. Leadership Responsibility
- Stewarding one's leadership and administrative roles through communication, dealing with conflict, managing change, emotional and cultural intelligence

1. Personal Stewardship

Rationale: Without good stewardship of our own lives, we will be less effective in our service to God and others and be more vulnerable to temptations and Satan's snares.

Possible Topics Include:

1. **Physical Wellness** – sleep, diet, exercise, managing health conditions, rest/relaxation, etc.
2. **Emotional Wellness** – healthy thinking and emotions; ability to work through difficult emotions, healthy self-concept, interests that allow for healthy disconnection from stressors.
3. **Relational Health**– authentic connections with those that provide both support/encouragement as well as honest/candid feedback; self-disclosure to key confidants; mentor, friendships.
4. **Spiritual Vitality** - maintaining one's personal relationship and connection and to God, practice of the spiritual disciplines; worship

2. Marriage and Family

Rationale: God uses marriage and family relationships as an analogy of Christ's relationship with the Church and God's relationship to His children.

- Satan targets the relationships inside a church leader's home with special fervor as he knows how difficult it is to minister when feeling disconnected at home.
- He is also aware that sexual indiscretion can not only split a marriage, but can also damage the church and dishonor Christ publicly.

2. Marriage and Family Possible Topics Include:

1. **Marriage:** Maintaining oneness and connection through the busy-ness of life; overcoming conflict; supporting one another well; healthy emotional and physical intimacy.
2. **Family:** Maintaining relationships with your children both in and out of your home. Ensuring that your children know and feel your love and commitment to them. Awareness of how your children feel about you and your role. Caring for aging parents; grandchildren

3. Leadership Responsibility

Rationale: Ministry would be easy if it wasn't for the people. However, people is what ministry is about.

- Administrative tasks such as scheduling and planning events are never-ending and frustrating.
- Leadership tasks of guiding a diverse group of people with various needs and abilities is challenging.
- When people issues are not handled well, increased conflict, misunderstanding and stress occurs.
- Satan takes full advantage of this within the church knowing that harming the church from the inside is one of his best options.

Possible Topics Include:

1. **Emotional Intelligence:** understanding the emotions (our own and others), being able to listen well to others, discerning how to respond appropriately.

3. Leadership Responsibility: Additional Possible Topics

2. **Cultural Intelligence:** understanding current cultural forces as well as backgrounds of one's self and others; awareness of geographical, educational, socioeconomic, generational differences in our church communities.
3. **Personality:** understanding our personality strengths and weaknesses as well as being able to understand and work with others of different personality styles.
4. **Conflict Management:** effective skills to deal with conflict between others; effective skills to handle criticism when it is directed toward us; healthy boundaries.
5. **Communication Skills:** communication skills in a variety of forms from one-on-one to congregational; email/written; communicating to the various generations through various means.
6. **Change Management:** ability to help the congregation be able to understand and work through changes and transitions.

Mentoring & Accountability

A NEW LOOK AT FAMILIAR CONCEPTS

Traditional Understanding of Mentoring and Accountability

- **Mentoring**

- Advising, teaching, coaching, coming alongside someone.
- The older (or more seasoned) is providing this to someone who is younger or less experienced.
- Power levels are often different with the mentor often having more power and authority in the relationship than the mentee.

- **Accountability**

- Willingness to be open with another person and accept responsibility for one's actions.
- Often, one or both people in the relationship is seeking accountability to try to address or curb a problematic behavior or issue.

New Perspective: Peer Mentoring & Proactive Accountability

- **Peer Mentoring**

- Sharing personally together, learning from one another, listening, encouraging, challenging, and checking-in with one another.
- Age and experience levels may or may not be different; Levels of power and authority may be equivalent.

- **Proactive Accountability**

- Willingness to be open with another person and share about the current strengths and weaknesses of one's life and relationships.
- Individuals may not have any areas of major problem focus. Rather, accountability is focused on the maintenance of wellness, prevention, and early intervention.

Types of Information Shared

1. **Logistical** – This is information about how to handle or perform various church duties (communion, baptism, discipline).
 2. **Spiritual** – This is information about the Word, doctrine, and church positions.
 3. **Personal** – This is how we personally feel, function, and relate to others.
- We believe that elders often share together about 1 and 2. This has long been a part of the eldership.
 - We are recommending intentional focus, increase, and inclusion of 3.

Consider

- We aren't trying to say that your relationships with each other aren't good or that you need to give up your current relationships for new ones.
- It is possible that there are already built relationships between you that simply need encouragement to talk more specifically about personal matters.
- Commonly, there is a mixture of logistical, spiritual, and personal counsel shared.
- If you know you have a specific need, it would be good to state what type of information you are seeking.

New & Seasoned Elders

- **New elders:**

- Need a **significant** amount of logistical information as they enter the role.
- Need **specific** spiritual information as they encounter situations and cases.
- Need **steady** personal check-ins, encouragement, and community.

- **Seasoned Elders:**

- Need **specific** logistical and spiritual information situations arise.
- Need **steady** personal check-ins, encouragement, and community.

Wellness Assessment – 2020

Description of the Wellness Assessment

- Intended to promote discussion that is past surface-level communication, while not being intrusive.
- Covers each of the 3 Key Areas (5 questions each):
 - Personal Stewardship
 - Marriage & Family
 - Leadership Responsibility
- Based on how you are doing in each area:
 - You may want to consider what next steps you can take to improve, strengthen, or maintain an area.
 - You may also want to consider how Satan may try to subtly or overtly try to take advantage of an area.

WELLNESS ASSESSMENT FOR ELDERS, ORDAINED DEACONS & WIVES - 2020

Directions: Read the following questions and make a rating along each continuum for how you feel at this present time. Answer each item from your own perspective, unless otherwise noted. After completing the assessment for yourself, you can use the results for personal reflection or for discussion with a spouse or mentor.

A. PERSONAL STEWARDSHIP

1. How would you describe your personal connection to Christ?
Very Close ----- Disconnected
2. How is your practice of the spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, the Word, meditation, personal worship, fasting, confession, etc.)?
Regular Personal ----- Haphazard/
Communion with God ----- Inconsistent
3. Are you maintaining your physical health (e.g., adequate sleep, healthy diet, exercise, monitoring/treating health conditions)?
Actively/Regularly ----- I am neglecting
Maintaining ----- aspects of my health.
4. How is your emotional health and management of challenges such as stress, anger, anxiety, depression, and/or grief?
I'm in a good ----- Difficulties have
place and like ----- piled up and it is
how I feel ----- hard to function.
5. Do you have others you can confide in about personal matters?
I have several close ----- I am isolated and
friends/mentors that ----- rarely confide in
I openly share with. ----- anyone.

B. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. How do you and your spouse do with sharing your hearts, having spiritual connection, and encouraging each other?
We regularly share ----- We are strangers.
and feel heard ----- Our communication
by each other. ----- is all logistical.
2. When my spouse and I have conflict, we can talk through what we need to and get to an adequate resolution.
Though challenging, ----- We are stuck and
we can effectively work ----- feel defeated. We
through our conflicts. ----- often avoid topics.
3. Are you giving adequate time and priority to your sexual relationship?
We are intentional ----- Our sexual
about meeting the other's ----- relationship is an
romantic and sexual needs. ----- afterthought.
4. How are you doing at staying connected with your children?
Even through the ----- We are essentially
busyness, we find ways ----- disconnected from
to keep up with each ----- our children's lives.
of the children.
5. Are you getting regular time alone as a couple? Scheduling time to get away?
We intentionally plan ----- We have little to
plan for time alone and ----- no time alone or
for getting away. ----- for getting away.

C. LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY

1. What is your overall level of busyness and pace of life?
Sustainable ----- Unsustainable.
A manageable pace ----- Like running a sprint
that ebbs and flows. ----- and I can't keep up.
2. How are you handling conflict with others?
Passive/Avoidant ----- Aggressive/Conflictual
There are issues that ----- All know where I stand, but
I need to address, but I ----- "Direct with Respect" ----- I can come off too harshly
avoid due to anxiety/fear. ----- and injure relationships.
3. How are you connecting with the various generations in the church?
I regularly interact with ----- I rarely interact with
each generation in the ----- some generations.
church and consider their ----- My interaction patterns
needs, gifts, and concerns. ----- are quite lopsided.
4. [For Elders] How are you doing at delegating within the minister group and congregation?
I am very intentional ----- I rarely delegate.
about involving, training, ----- I take on most
and delegating to others. ----- things myself.
5. [For Elders] How are you doing at managing the administrative tasks (scheduling, calls, emails, meetings) of church leadership?
Manageable ----- Overwhelming. I feel
It can be a lot of work, ----- like I'm always behind and
but I have a system that ----- falling further behind.
works for me. -----

Levels of Reflection & Discussion

1. **Individual Reflection**
 - Each elder and wife is encouraged to do personal and prayerful reflection with God on each area.
2. **Review and Discussion with Spouse**
 - Each spouse can share how they feel personally; they can share observations of the other; reflect together on shared areas.
3. **Discussion with a Peer Mentor**
 - We encouraged each elder to discuss these with another elder; each wife with another wife.
 - Intentional mentoring relationships are encouraged.

Perspective from Wives

Perspective from Wives

I acknowledge the following truths for both elders and wives:

1. It is difficult to manage a full plate
2. Responsibilities are diverse – some uncomfortable to do and some difficult to delegate
3. The work involves sacrifice
4. We are all learning

Perspective from Wives

1. Personal Stewardship
 - How well the individual is coping impacts everyone else at home
 - The individual's health impacts the other two areas and how we do life in general
2. Marriage and Family
 - We teach our children by our actions - do we teach them to cope by withdrawing from family
 - Do not want to teach our kids that elder responsibility is bad for them
 - Struggles here impact the church – remember wife and children are part of the church
 - If we know that the other is working on improving – then it is easier to cope the interim struggle

Perspective from Wives

3. Church Leadership Responsibility
 - If this area is too overwhelming or out of balance it will impact the other three areas

In summary:

- Wife is chief encourager – but elder also needs to take responsibility for his health
- It is a gift to the family if elder/wife is healthy in all areas. Things like this assessment will help us be aware of how we are stewarding what God has given us – it at least starts the conversation
- God is faithful – His grace will be with us in the future and is not dependent on us getting everything right

Proposed Name Going Forward

360 Wellness: Intent & Vision



WELLNESS
Encouraging Healthy Stewardship in Ministry

1. Christ-centered in all areas.
 2. Encompassing public and private life.
 3. Stewardship focused.
 4. Emphasis on being proactive vs. reactive.
- **Mindset:** The pursuit of growth is viewed as the best way to put up a firewall against Satan's attacks.

Question & Answer

Discussion

1. What questions do you have about what was presented?
2. What barriers do you see to implementing this? Individually? Maritally? Mentoring?
3. What topics would you like to see addressed by this effort?
4. We are interested in identifying brothers or sisters who would like to participate in this effort.

March 4, 2020

Dear Elders, Ordained Deacons and Wives,

This Wellness Assessment has been created for the purpose of seeking to support our individual and collective vitality in the ministry. Our adversary, Satan, is against us and the Lord's work, so we don't want to be ignorant of his devices (*2 Corinthians 2:11*). While this assessment is not intended to be comprehensive, it will give you an opportunity to reflect on a variety of areas of your life. Doing so can allow us to take proactive steps when possible, and to address needs when and if they arise.

This assessment will provide a snapshot in three main areas.

- A. **Personal Stewardship:** Stewarding the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual aspects of one's life as a foundational part of being in ministry.
- B. **Marriage and Family:** Stewarding one's marriage and family relationships in a way that prioritizes those connections and adequately meets needs.
- C. **Leadership Responsibility:** Stewarding one's leadership and administrative roles through communication, delegation, dealing with conflict, managing change, emotional and cultural intelligence.

This assessment can be used:

1. For your personal reflection with the Lord.
2. To promote discussion and understanding between you and your spouse.
3. To facilitate discussion between you and a mentor/accountability partner.
4. To review how you are doing periodically through the year.

Based on how you are doing in each area:

- You may want to consider what next steps you can take to improve, strengthen, or maintain an area.
- You may also want to consider how Satan may try to subtly or overtly try to take advantage of an area.

As you go through this assessment, please remember that everyone's life, marriage, and church go through times of joy and challenge. Growth is about progress, not perfection.

Respectfully,

360 Wellness Workgroup

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Maintaining aspects of my health.

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Even through the busyness, we find ways to keep up with each of the children.

We are essentially disconnected from our children's lives.

5. Are you getting regular time alone as a couple? Scheduling time to get away?

We intentionally plan for time alone and for getting away.

We have little to no time alone or for getting away.

C. LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY

1. What is your overall level of busyness and pace of life?

Sustainable. A manageable pace that ebbs and flows.

Unsustainable. Like running a sprint and I can't keep up.

2. How are you handling conflict with others?

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Assertive
"Direct with Respect"

Aggressive/Conflictual. All know where I stand, but I can come off too harshly and injure relationships.

3. How are you connecting with the various generations in the church?

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I rarely interact with some generations. My interaction patterns are quite lopsided.

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I am very intentional about involving, training, and delegating to others.

I rarely delegate. I take on most things myself.

5. [For Elders] How are you doing at managing the administrative tasks (scheduling, calls, emails, meetings) of church leadership?

Manageable. It can be a lot of work, but I have a system that works for me.

Overwhelming. I feel like I'm always behind and falling further behind.