

## CIRCUIT OVERSEER MEETS WITH ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS PROGRAM FOR MARCH 2016 THROUGH AUGUST 2016

*Note to the circuit overseer:*

Express the points in a simple and clear manner. Use the Scriptures as the foundation of your teaching. Instill in the brothers the confidence that they can fulfill their many and varied responsibilities with the help of Jehovah's spirit and by adhering closely to the instructions of the faithful and discreet slave. (Zec 4:6; Heb 13:17) Not all cited texts need to be read, nor must every subpoint be discussed (tg 18:9)

Theme: Prove Yourself to Be a Shepherd of the Sheep (Jer 23:3, 4)

### **AM I A REAL SHEPHERD?** (3 min.)

Collectively, appointed men fulfill Jehovah's promise to care for and protect the sheep [**Read Jeremiah 23:3, 4**]

Jehovah has put elders in place to lead the sheep through the most critical time in human history (Eph 4:11, 12; 2Ti 3:1)

Ministerial servants who are reaching out to be overseers can learn much from elders (1Ti 3:1)

With the changing scene of the world, shepherds must stay vigilant (1Co 7:31)

Individuals may face distressing personal or family situations

In addition, terrorism, crime, war, disease, a natural disaster, or persecution can suddenly impact an entire congregation

As pressures mount, ask yourself: 'Am I proving to be a shepherd who provides practical assistance to the flock? Am I an example worthy of imitation?'

We will consider three things that can help us to be real shepherds of the sheep:

- (1) Keeping ourselves and our family spiritually strong
- (2) Accepting the responsibility to shepherd the sheep
- (3) Making sure of the more important things

### **KEEP YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY SPIRITUALLY STRONG** (15 min.)

If we are to be a true hiding place for the congregation, we must keep ourselves spiritually strong [**Read Isaiah 32:1, 2**]

**Question:** What are a few essential activities that help keep you spiritually strong? [Allow the brothers to comment freely. Encourage them to make a concerted effort to include the following three activities in their spiritual routine]

- (1) *Maintain a good schedule* of daily personal Bible reading and meditation (Heb 4:12)

In addition to keeping up with the congregation's weekly Bible reading schedule, could you set other goals in connection with your personal Bible reading?

- (2) *Diligently study* the weekly *Watchtower* lesson (Pr 4:13)

Meditate on and promptly apply its Bible-based counsel

- (3) *Pray daily* for Jehovah to help and support you (1Pe 4:7)

Fervent prayer at least once a day will lift your spirits and instill in you the confidence that you can successfully fulfill your responsibilities

A basic requirement for an appointed man is to 'preside over his household in a fine manner' (1Ti 3:4, 5, 12, 13)

**Situation:** A busy elder with many responsibilities may conscientiously read the Bible daily but neglect family worship

**Questions:** Why would it be dangerous for an appointed man to maintain his own spirituality but neglect that of his family? How can fathers who are appointed men ensure that their families make spiritual progress? (*w06 5/1 19 ¶8-9; w15 11/15 5-6 ¶8-9*)

In some congregations, it has been observed that family heads (including some who serve as elders or ministerial servants) have hindered the spiritual growth of their children by postponing their becoming unbaptized publishers and getting baptized, even though the young ones meet the Scriptural qualifications and are eager to take these steps (*w88 3/15 14-15 ¶21-22*)

Timothy was taught “from infancy” [**Read 2 Timothy 3:14, 15**] (*km 1/01 4*)

The earlier the training starts, the greater the likelihood your children will develop a solid foundation in the truth and make the ministry their career (*Pr 22:6*)

[Briefly review key points from “A Message to Christian Parents” in the *Organized* book, pages 165 and 166]

**Questions:** What positive influence can a father’s attitude toward Bible study, meeting attendance, and the ministry have on his children’s relationship with God? Why have some parents decided that one of the parents will study with a child from the *Bible Teach* book or *God’s Love* book apart from the regular Family Worship sessions? (*w15 11/15 4*)

Spiritually strong elders, ministerial servants, and their families are a true blessing to the congregation

[Briefly provide specific, warm commendation for some of the ways in which the families of the appointed men are setting a good example]

## **ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR THE SHEEP (16 min.)**

Jehovah has promised the sheep that “none will be missing” (*Jer 23:4*)

That places a weighty responsibility on our shoulders to be caring, attentive shepherds who really protect the flock

Love for Jehovah and Jesus moves us to continue to develop the qualities of a self-sacrificing and effective spiritual shepherd (*Joh 21:15-17; od 30-36 ¶4-19; 50-51 ¶3-6*)

**Question:** In what practical ways can group overseers and group servants demonstrate that they are attentive to the sheep under their care? (*od 39-41 ¶29-33*)

(1) By working with the brothers and sisters in the preaching work (*Lu 8:1; od 35 ¶17; 51 ¶4; w06 5/1 18-19 ¶6*)

(2) By remaining alert to the spiritual and material needs of the brothers and sisters

We must not overlook the elderly, orphans, and widows

Arrange practical help as needed (*1Jo 3:17, 18*)

Those who are spiritually weak or inactive are still loved by Jehovah, and all in the congregation must work together to help them [**Read Luke 15:4-10**]

Elders should act without delay, not just when learning of someone who has left the flock but even when seeing someone take a false step (*Ga 6:1; w08 11/15 15-16 ¶16-17*)

**Questions:** What are some situations that might indicate that a sheep is drifting or drawing away from the flock? (*Heb 2:1; 3:12*) How can an alert shepherd quickly direct such an individual back to the safety of the congregation? [Briefly mention features of the *Return to Jehovah* brochure and how it can be used]

As highlighted in the November 2015 JW Broadcasting program, those who return to the congregation should be warmly welcomed

We should be gentle, thorough, and earnest in our efforts to help inactive ones who want to come back to Jehovah

[Remind the elders of direction provided in the letter dated May 23, 2010, to all bodies of elders, specifically regarding an inactive person resuming field service and regarding assisting repentant wrongdoers]

“Some individuals stop preaching and attending meetings because they have committed a serious sin. They may feel that if they confess their wrongdoing to the elders, they will be disfellowshipped. But they will not be expelled from the congregation if they have discontinued the unscriptural practice and are genuinely repentant. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) Instead, they will be welcomed back, and the elders will give them the spiritual help they need” (w08 11/15 14 ¶12)

Jehovah and Jesus have deep affection for all you brothers, and they value your strenuous efforts to care for the precious sheep (Php 2:29)

### **MAKE SURE OF “THE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS” (13 min.)**

Matters involving our worship are “the more important things” that deserve our attention (Php 1:9-11)

In these critical times, we can easily be distracted by the “storms,” or trials, of this changing world

As long as Peter maintained his focus on Jesus, he actually walked over turbulent waters (Mt 14:29)

But looking at the windstorm, he became overwhelmed with fear and doubt and began to sink (Mt 14:30)

In order to endure trials successfully, we must keep focused on Jesus (Heb 12:2)

This will help us to center our lives on family worship, the field ministry, congregation meetings, prayer, and all the other activities that keep us spiritually strong

Elders play a vital role in helping congregation members to avoid becoming terrified or distracted by the conditions in Satan’s world (Jer 23:4b)

Fix clearly in your mind the description of our responsibilities found at 1 Peter 5:2, 3 [**Read and discuss**]

Jehovah’s people need mature men who possess strong faith and who are willing to help their brothers (Mic 5:5; w13 11/15 20 ¶16-17)

This is especially true now and as we near the great tribulation and the attack on God’s people by a coalition of nations, “Gog of Magog” (Eze 38:2, 10-13; w15 5/15 29-30)

### **CONCLUSION (3 min.)**

[**Read and briefly analyze Jeremiah 23:3, 4**]

The Governing Body appreciates your many acts of love in behalf of the congregation

You are proving to be shepherds who truly care for the flock in these difficult days

It can be a challenge to care for personal and family needs while supporting the congregation

You are not alone in your efforts to protect the sheep

All that you do does not go unnoticed by Jehovah and Jesus, and you will be richly rewarded as you prove to be a shepherd to the sheep

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

### **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS (2 min.)**

[Stress the importance of the brothers’ maintaining up-to-date contact information for all publishers so that they can be reached quickly in case of emergency.—See the letter dated January 6, 2012, to all bodies of elders]

## **PUBLIC WITNESSING (3 min.)**

[Remind the elders of the letter dated July 15, 2014, to all bodies of elders. (*tg* 10:7-8) The Congregation Service Committee should check on the following: (1) Are the current public witnessing locations and times the most effective? Are the locations in areas of high pedestrian traffic? If not, adjustments should be made. (2) Is literature being wasted or misused? (3) It would be good for public witnessing locations to display artwork that features our Bible study program regularly at various times throughout the month, alternating with artwork that features magazines or other literature. Such artwork is available on [jw.org](http://jw.org). (4) Those approved by the service committee to participate in public witnessing should be reminded to display a warm smile and friendly manner. They should feel free to extend a warm greeting to passersby]

## **STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH THEOCRATIC DIRECTION (10 min.)**

[Remind the elders to read all letters addressed to the bodies of elders, which are being made available on [jw.org](http://jw.org). Elders should check their personal inbox on [jw.org](http://jw.org) at least weekly. If any elder needs further assistance, arrangements should be made for another capable elder or ministerial servant to provide the needed help. Elders who do not use a computer or who do not have access to the Internet should be provided with a printed copy of the letters to read.—See the letter dated July 12, 2014, to all bodies of elders]

Stay up-to-date with published direction as you carry out your responsibilities in the congregation

Much has been asked of you brothers in recent times. This includes asking you to implement a number of organizational adjustments. Thank you for your positive response to these changes

[As time allows, demonstrate how commonly asked questions, such as those listed below, can usually be answered by doing research. Remind the elders of the value of consulting the *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22) on [jw.org](http://jw.org)]

**How do the coordinator of the body of elders and the Life and Ministry Meeting overseer work together to prepare the monthly schedule?** [See *Instructions for Our Christian Life and Ministry Meeting* (S-38), paragraphs 11 and 13]

**What encouragement can be given to an unbaptized publisher to help him make spiritual progress and qualify for baptism?** [See *Organized*, pages 72-73, 165-169]

**Where can we find direction on making effective shepherding calls?** [See *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 4, paragraph 6]

**How might we give a more thorough witness in the congregation's assigned territory?** [See *Organized*, pages 90-97, highlighting the direction about coverage of territory using group and personal territories, cooperating to preach to people of all languages, and group witnessing]

**What assistance should the elders provide to a family in the congregation that is expecting a child?** [See the letter dated December 11, 2011, to all bodies of elders and *How Parents Can Protect Their Children From Misuse of Blood* (S-55)]

**Who should be used as public speakers, and what hospitality arrangements should be made for visiting speakers?** [See the letter dated May 25, 2011, to all bodies of elders]