

Notes of Elders Meetings

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Posted March 24, 2023

2023, March 20 – Elders Meetings in Oregon, S. Idaho, Montana, Wyoming by Doyle Smith re: Dean Bruer

1960 Elders Meeting – Portland, Oregon by Howard Mooney

1985 Elders Meeting – Redmond, Oregon by Howard Mooney

1991 Elders Meeting by Sydney Holt (Coeur d'Alene Field)

1992 Elders Meeting by Sydney Holt

1975 California Elders Meeting by Eldon Tenniswood

Fellowship Meeting Guidelines – no date or speaker

Don'ts for Fellowship Meetings – no date or author

Elders Meetings in Oregon, S. Idaho, Montana, Wyoming
by Doyle Smith re: Dean Bruer
March 20, 2023

Our Dear Friends,

It is with a very heavy heart we share the following difficult information, but we feel it is imperative that we do so. We trust you will understand and be in agreement.

We have come to the tragic conclusion that Dean Bruer had another side to his life that none of us, except victims, ever witnessed or suspected. It has come to the surface in recent months, and more so in recent weeks, that Dean was a sexual predator. We *never* respect or defend such *totally* inappropriate behavior among us. There is a *very* united consensus among us that the *only* thing to do is to be transparent with all of you for obvious reasons, though this is very difficult. We are very sorry for the hurt this will bring to the hearts of many. Thankfully, he is no longer in a position to hurt anyone.

Some things have come to light from Dean's *own* records. Dean had his own Best Western Hotel preferred customer account and spent a considerable amount of time and money in motels. As we all know, when he died last June, it was in a motel in Government Camp, OR; a place that he frequented. The receipts often included "two guests". Victims have come forward, and there was very confirming and incriminating evidence found on his computer and phone.

His actions include rape and abuse of underage victims. He *totally* abused his authority as an overseer in order to control, manipulate and threaten his victims. We are strongly recommending our staff look at the Ministry Safe Program and possibly other venues that help understand, recognize, and prevent such problems.

Overwhelmingly, our greatest concern in all of this is the victims, known and unknown. We do hope and pray this message somehow reaches the ears of every unknown victim if there are more. We feel very *anxious* to assure them that we are anxious to do everything possible to be a support. We understand that people like this are *dangerously* equipped to twist what has happened in such a way that the victim feels it's their fault, and thereby the predator's criminal behavior is hidden from others. We assure you, there is *no* possibility anyone will lay blame. except at the feet of the ONE very wrong man who has caused your pain. We are sorry! We *hope* you will have courage to reach out to any of us, or anyone that you feel you can talk to. We understand your need for privacy as well as support working through this, and we all intend to respect that.

None of us had any idea that such terrible things were happening until several weeks after his death. There is no possible way that this would not have been immediately reported had we known. Some of us very much regret that we didn't somehow discover his actions and prevent more pain. We all feel betrayed naturally. We have come to the conclusion that the very dangerous thing about people like him is that they do what they do *without conscience*, thus it's much easier for them to pretend to be something that they aren't. We cannot live a lie when we love truth, and honestly live before God, respecting His approval as the scripture teaches us.

We sang recently, "All through the storm I see thy face beaming with love and with saving grace." Our desperate prayer for you all, especially anyone that has been hurt, is that G. will show Himself very strong. In Mark 4, the disciples found themselves in the worst storm of their life which caused a lot of distress. But at the conclusion of the storm there was a greater appreciation than ever for the

miracle capacity Jesus had to deliver perfect peace despite storms. Our hearts desperately ache for the disappointment and sense of betrayal this will bring to countless hearts and again *especially* for the pain inflicted to victims. We pray the miracle somehow, someday, will be as great as it was in Mark 4 for all.

Keep close to God dear friends. There is an immense capacity in the hand of God to help us. Thank you for all the prayers we know this will generate!

Sincerely your brother

Doyle S. [Smith]

[Overseer of Oregon and S. Idaho]

Another Bruer notification letter: **Possibly** by Rob Newman for CA/AZ workers
(mentions "California Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training")

Please do not forward this letter. We would prefer that this letter not be directly shared with others to avoid needlessly harming anyone through indiscretion.

Recently Doyle Smith and Scott Rauscher shared some very unfortunate and difficult information with us. We feel it imperative that we share this information with you in an effort to be transparent. We want you to be aware of this situation in Oregon and Montana so that when it comes up in conversation you will know these facts that have come to light in recent days. I would have rather visited each of you in person but time does not allow.

We stand with our brethren in these matters. Considering how serious and shocking these facts are, we should be aware that this may deeply affect some of our friends. It would be good if we can be ready with His help to answer and comfort our friends who are trying to understand how this could have happened, and to point them to the One who has the answers.

We should also mention the following:

- Programs such as the "California Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training" will help us to understand, recognize, and prevent such problems.
- I will send an email to the elders in your fields shortly. They may wish to visit with you. If it makes it easier, they may call me or one of the older brothers on our staff.
- We need to be discrete so as not to hurt anyone involved or affected, while in no way allowing any inappropriate behavior to go unreported.
- If you learn of any victims, it is important to do your utmost to keep their identities private for their personal protection.

Doyle very helpfully concluded his letter with the following paragraph:

We sang recently, "All through the storm I see thy face beaming with love and with saving grace." Our desperate prayer for you all, especially anyone that has been hurt, is that G. will show Himself very strong. In Mark 4, the disciples found themselves in the worst storm of their life which caused a lot of distress. But at the conclusion of the storm there was a greater appreciation than ever for the miracle capacity Jesus had to deliver perfect peace despite storms. Our hearts desperately ache for the disappointment and sense of betrayal this will bring to countless hearts and again *especially* for the pain inflicted to victims. We pray the miracle somehow, someday, will be as great as it was in Mark 4 for all.

Keep close to God dear friends. There is an immense capacity in the hand of God to help us. Thank you for all the prayers we know this will generate!

Elders Meeting – Portland, Oregon – April 5, 1960

By Howard Mooney

It is quite possible that not too many of you have been in a meeting like this before. We arranged this gathering tonight, because we have found it helpful from time to time to gather the elders together and discuss with them the things that are of mutual interest to us. We hope that this gathering will be will be most profitable. One of the things we would like to accomplish this evening is to help you to realize how much we appreciate the place you are filling, as elders in this great fellowship. The older I grow in the work, the more I find myself thanking God for men like you. I am so thankful that God, in His perfect plan, did not leave out the elders. They take such a great load from our shoulders. In fact, it is hard for us to find words that express just how much this means to us.

Paul's letter to Philemon has, along this line, meant a great deal to me. This was written by Paul, a servant, to Philemon, an elder. It also took in his beloved wife, Apphia. The wives of elders can do much in helping their husbands fill the worthy place they have been called upon to fill. This is why we asked you wives to accompany your husbands here tonight. In this letter Paul referred to Philemon as a fellow laborer verse 1; a partner verse 17; a brother verse 20. It is so hard for the religious world to comprehend a relationship

like this existing. They cannot begin to produce an association like this, between their ministry and deity. This is a miracle found in God's true way. To us it is an increasing miracle; to those looking on, it is a deep mystery.

When you think of a fellow laborer, you could think of two oxen yoked together both serving the same master, both pulling the same load, both laboring for the interest of the same field. This is a wonderful picture of the relationship existing between Paul and Philemon. The work partner reminds us that this is also the Father's business. At the early age of 12, Jesus was very much concerned about His Father's business. They share their profit and loss together. Partners have the same interest in the same business. They go through the same ups and downs. Their existence today and their hope tomorrow, depends on upon that business. They are for that reason, both constrained to put their best into it.

Another nice thought about partners is that when one is away, they know that the other is taking the same interest in the business as though they were there. This has often meant a great deal to me. We are often called away to help out with special meetings, conventions, etc. How comforting it is at such times to know that we have a partner watching over each little flock. Men who have the same deep concern for that flock as we have. Again, I say, it is hard to find words to express just how much this means to us.

Paul not only spoke of Philemon as a fellow laborer and a partner, he also spoke of him as a brother. This speaks of a closer relationship still, a personal feeling, something deep-down inside that makes one care for you. I am very glad that this same relationship, this same care, still exists between God's servants and elders.

I look upon my privilege of being in the work as the greatest privilege God could give to a man. You can look upon your privilege of being an elder, as a god-given privilege, too. Both these privileges, however, are accompanied by a great responsibility. When you turn to Acts 20:28, you realize a little better how great that responsibility is. This was part of Paul's last visit with the elders of Ephesus. This verse speaks of the "church of God, which He hath purchased with His Own Blood." A blood-bought group of people, the most precious souls in the world. And to think that God has entrusted to us the great responsibility of feeding and caring for them! This is a wonderful privilege, with a tremendous responsibility.

A great deal is mentioned about the qualifications of a servant of God. You read of them in the scriptures, you hear them often mentioned in Gospel Meetings and other meetings. There is also a great deal in the Bible mentioned about the qualifications of elders. We would encourage you to read, often, 1 Timothy 3. Also Titus 1:5-9. Both these passages contain a list of qualities that every elder should possess. It is in Titus 1:5-7, where we are told that an elder and a bishop are the same. The word bishop, which means an overseer, is really the word that describes the position. They were also referred to as elders, though, because they were chosen from among the older ones.

Paul told Timothy not to appoint a novice, 1 Timothy 3:6, lest he be lifted up with pride. If one who is new in the faith, was appointed to fill the place of a bishop, he might get the wrong idea. He might think that he is being given a high office and he could be lifted up with pride over it. To older ones, though it is just the opposite effect. It humbles them to the dust. They realize the seriousness of their calling. To think that God has actually entrusted to them the care of such a precious group! To an honest heart, this is very humbling. That is why the bishops were to be chosen from the elders, or the older ones.

Some time ago, one of our brothers gave us an acrostic to the word bishop. He mentioned that if a man is a good bishop, he will be a:

B – Brother
I – Instructor
S – Servant
H – Helper
O – Overseer
P – Protector

A brother is one who can be easily approached. This is so vital. I do not know of anything more important than to be the one that others can feel free to come to for advice and encouragement. We feel so much the need of this quality as workers. Nothing would hurt me more than to know that someone was afraid to come to me with their problem. This is one of the reasons that Jesus forbade His ministers to take a title. Those titles belong to the Father and Christ, "Ye are brethren". You read of this in Matthew 23:8. Jesus knew that if these men began to take titles, it would automatically place them on a pedestal. He was not sending them out as dignitaries. He was sending them out to be brethren, men who could easily be approached. It is also important to be an "Instructor," one who is instructed in the Word and who is in a position to give Godly instruction to others.

Then comes the thought of a "Servant". In God's way, we rule by serving. There is a definite order of God's plan and when this is followed, you need no organization. According to God's order, the church is subject to the bishop, the bishop is subject to the ministry, the ministry is subject to Christ, and Christ is subject to God. When that order is followed, you need no organization. I realize that that, as a worker, it is only through service that I can hope to command the respect of the bishop. It is only through your willingness to serve that you as a bishop, can hope to command the respect of the flock you are in charge of. Jesus said, "I am among you as He that serveth".

The letter 'H' speaks of a helper, one who is ready, at all times, to lend a helping hand. 'O' stands for overseer. You might also think of overcomer. We cannot help others, unless we ourselves are overcomers. Last, but not least, there is the protector. The flock cannot protect themselves. One feels so responsible in this. We can't afford to lose any of these precious souls, over which the Holy Ghost has made us overseers. So, a bishop should be a brother, an instructor, a servant, a helper, an overseer and a protector.

We might also notice what Peter mentioned about the elders. You will find this in 1 Peter 5:1-4. Peter included himself in these verses among the elders. He was an older worker upon whose shoulders the care and responsibility of many was resting. His main message was: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but by being ensamples to the flock". We could not hope to help God's people by lording over them. There may be times when one has to exercise their responsibility, but those times are rare and our main hope of helping others is by our ensample. It is so often true, that the spiritual health of a little flock is determined by the health of the elder. There is so much more to do, besides giving out the hymns in a meeting. That is why we are so deeply grateful to God for the men who are proving to be real bishops, or elders.

Notice the word 'ensamples'. There is a difference between an "ensample" and an "example." An example is an original copy. An ensample is a duplicate copy of the original. In making blueprints, for an illustration, the architect draws out the original copy. This is the example. They might make 50 (prints) reprints of it, but they are called ensamples. They are copies of the original. In our fellowship we have only one perfect example, that is Christ. We uphold Him in all things. However, when we allow God to conform us to the image of Christ, then we become reprints of that original — or ensamples. Like Paul was able to say in 1 Cor. 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ".

There are a great many ways in which one can be an ensample to the flock. Peter spoke of one of them, in verse 2, of this 5th chapter: "Feed the flock of God". Each year we realize more fully that the shorter testimonies carry the most food. We were told, at a recent special meeting, that it takes 40 gallons of maple sap to make 1 gallon of maple syrup. That represents a lot of boiling down. We might enjoy many things from the scriptures, during the week, but it takes a great deal of boiling down before it can be "real food" for others. Did you ever notice what is said of Asher, Genesis 49:20 "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties". Royal dainties are condensed. They are rich, and nourishing, and you enjoy every bit of them. I have known men, whose testimonies were like that, and you found yourself eagerly looking forward to hearing them each time.

We can also be an ensample in prayer. Prayers play such a vital part in the meeting. I have been in some meetings where I felt that the prayers had been more of a detriment than a help. In other meetings, you feel that it was a period of prayer that made the meeting so helpful. Do you ever prepare a prayer in your heart before coming to the meeting? We would not think of standing up and giving our testimony without some forethought, would we? Why then should we attempt to pray without a little premeditation. This is scriptural.

You read of those who prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God in 11 Chron. 19:3. "Pour out your heart before Him," Psalm 62:8. When you pray, do you pour out your heart...or do you pour out whatever comes into your mind? I have found that when I take time to prepare in my heart something before the meeting, it is so much easier for me to pray in the meeting. I like to think of something special that I am desirous of, or thankful for. Something that I did not pray for in the last few meetings. To pray briefly and originally in a meeting is to pray helpfully. It saves us from the tendency of "vain repetitions".

One thing I have learned from the prayers of Jesus is that He always prayed specifically. He never prayed at random. You will notice this in Luke 10:21 also in John 11:41-42. No doubt Jesus had a multitude of things he could have thanked God for on each of these occasions. He didn't though. He prayed specifically for the thing relative to the occasion. This secret has been a great help to me, especially in my private praying. When we return thanks for the food, it should be for the food. When we pray for the meeting, it should be for the meeting. When we give thanks for the bread and wine, it should be for the bread and wine. I have known some who have missed the mark entirely by simply praying the same routine prayer for every occasion. I would like to learn to pray specifically like Jesus did. If we, as workers and elders, learn to pray this way, we would be a wonderful ensample for the little flock to follow after.

Another thing about prayer: There seems to be a common tendency for many to subdue their voices while praying in the meeting. There is another scriptural about that. So often the person praying can only be heard by the few nearest to them. Often the older folks have complained that they can only hear a small part of the prayers. That is too bad. Those old souls need encouragement and the stimulant of your prayers. If any thing, one should raise their voice while praying, at least loud enough so that all can easily hear and be edified and join in with a hearty "amen" too. This is another way in which we can be an ensample.

Maybe we should mention something about the "amen" too. This is something we have been very reluctant about because the holiness people have overdone it. In trying to be as unlike them as we can, we have sometimes transgressed the other way. To me there is something very helpful about a modest "amen" after each prayer and testimony. One of the things we remember so well about our brother Jack Carroll was the encouragement he gave us younger workers along that line. When we would be speaking in a meeting, trembling and often stuttering, there was something about the "amen" from that older man that would refresh the heart in us. I never want to forget what that meant to me. It is not easy for most of the Lord's people to pray and testify. An audible "amen" when they finish will assure them that you have fully appreciated their effort and that you have been helped by what they said. If we are faithful in doing this, the others will be encouraged to follow and it will add a great deal to the helpfulness of the meeting.

Some have asked about a problem they have in connection with praying for the bread and wine. Often this falls on the shoulders of one or two in the meeting. These emblems are something we should all be very thankful for, and we should all relish the privilege of taking our turn in expressing thanks. If there is a tendency in our flock for most to leave this up to one or two each Sunday, it would be very good to call on some of the others by name. It might be helpful to do this meeting after meeting until a number have been called upon. It would help all to realize their responsibility along this line.

There is the endless visiting that also goes with the responsibility of an elder. The flock needs so much visiting. The sick ones, the discouraged ones, the careless ones. They could easily lose out if we did not keep in touch with them. Probably we fail along this line

more than any other. We realize that the elder cannot keep up with all the visiting. Others in the flock should share the task. It is up to the elder though, to see to it that someone does make the necessary visits when those visits are needed. A little personal interest like that between meetings often goes a long way towards encouraging those who may be weary. We can't afford to lose any of them. They are too precious.

In closing, I would like to mention something about the neighbors. I have become very neighbor-conscious. We want every little meeting to be a light in the community, not an aggravation. The way in which the cars are parked, the way in which the children conduct themselves after the meetings, avoiding any undue excitement. We cannot be too careful about these things. We wouldn't want anything in connection with the meetings to irritate or distress the neighbors in any way. Like the golden candlestick, giving forth its light, each little group of God's people should add a golden glow to the community.

Elders Meeting, Redmond, Oregon 1985 (Probably By Howard Mooney)

The main purpose of a meeting like this is to help the Elders among us know how much they are appreciated, and what a valuable place they fill in this fellowship. The further on I go, the more I thank God that in his all-perfect way, he planned that there would be Elders. I don't suppose you know how much peace you bring to our minds, or how much of the load you take from off our shoulders. We are so glad that God has planned it to be that way. I might mention before we go further, that this is the only group of people in the world where this relationship exists between the ministers and the Elders and the saints. There are groups of people in the religious world and in the business world and the financial world that have a working relationship, but they know nothing about the meaning of the word 'fellowship'. This is the only group of people in the world where the Lord's servants, and the Elders and the Lord's people can work together in such a harmonious way.

I like the way in which Paul wrote in Philemon, verses 1, 17, and 20. Philemon was the Elder at Colosse and the church met in his home. Paul spoke of him as a fellow-laborer. Then he referred to him as a partner, and then he referred to him as a brother. As far as I know, this is the only time in the Scripture where an Elder is referred to as a 'fellow laborer'. This Elder, Philemon, had his heart so much in the Work of the gospel that he was doing everything he could to help Paul with his load and with his activities. He was as much help to Paul as any of the fellow laborers were. Then he referred to him as a 'partner'. Partners share and share alike. They are equal partners in the business. When one is away, they do not worry about the business because they know the other is looking after their interests the same as they would if they were present. I do not think you can understand how much it means to us, especially when we are on the other side of the sea, and we cannot be there with the little flocks as we would like to be. You cannot know how much it means to us to know we have a 'partner' who is watching out for the flock just as though we were there.

There are three chapters of Scripture that Elders and their wives should often read together. We would encourage you, to read together and to pray together. We do this as workers. These three chapters, are I Timothy 3, Titus 1 and I Peter 5. These chapters explain in detail the qualifications of the Elder and they explain in detail the responsibilities Elder's wife.

We are glad to see so many young couples with us in the meeting tonight. We have often encouraged the young married couples to read together these chapters and pray that God will work into their young lives the qualities that would prepare them so that if an Elder should pass away, they would be qualified to fill the vacancy. That happened over on the coast. A very worthy Elder, passed away. The church had prospered under his care. There was a young couple in that meeting probably in their early thirties. They had been in a convention meeting couple of years before this when we had encouraged our young, couples to read often these chapters together. This young couple had done this and when an Elder was needed to fill, the gap, they were qualified. I am, glad to tell you this little church is prospering under the direction of this new Elder even as it had before.

The church missed that old Elder, naturally. They had relied on him as a father. We are relying on you. You are the next generation. There are Elders among us that possibly will not be with us another year. You would be surprised to know the number of the Elders that have passed away within the last two years. We hope that these chapters will be as much of a stimulus to you, who are younger, as they are to those who are older and filling the place of an Elder in the flock today. There is nothing wrong with a person's wanting to be an Elder or their desire to fill the office of a deacon, and if a young person has this desire it is a godly desire.

In Titus 1, the terms 'Elder' and 'bishop' are used synonymously. We usually think of the one taking charge of the meeting when the Workers are away, as the 'Elder' because he is chosen from among the older ones. In I Timothy 3:6 we are reminded that you would not give a novice this responsibility. They might not realize the seriousness of it. They might be filled with pride. You would make sure that they understood the seriousness of the responsibility that is given to them. Paul used the words 'bishops' and 'Elders' interchangeably. The word, 'bishop,' means an 'overseer'.

In the first chapter of Philippians, Paul also referred to the "deacons," as well as the Elder. We are often asked what is the responsibility of the deacon? He was the one who took charge of the meeting when the Elder was not there. We like to follow the same pattern today. We like someone appointed to lead the meeting when the Elder is not there. That way there is no confusion. We found out one time that when an Elder was away his wife would ask some man in the meeting to lead the meeting. You would know that such was out of order. If for some reason you need to be away from your little flock, and you do not have someone to take your place, let us know so that the meeting can be directed as the Lord intended.

In the New, Testament days, there was more work involved than there is today because the church was responsible for the widows and the needy. There was no social security, benefits or other provision made and that is why the deacons were given this

responsibility. That is what Paul was talking about when he said, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under three score years, well reported of for good works, etc."

We had a woman come to us in a state of panic, and she asked, "Does that mean I cannot be taken into full fellowship until I am sixty?" Paul was referring to the widows whose care was resting upon the church. We do not have that care today, but there is another part of an Elder's responsibility which is equally as important. That is to see that the flock is visited. We have an Elder in Portland who would often call one younger couple in the meeting and say, "We have someone in the hospital, or there is someone in the meeting and something seems to be wrong with them, or someone else in the meeting last Sunday was shedding tears." He would see that they were visited. No one missed a meeting twice but what they were visited. No one was in the hospital but what they were visited. This is a very important part because we as workers cannot always be there. We never like to see a little old widow neglected or left alone, or anyone in a nursing home that is not visited. If there is a visit that you cannot make, you just call up the one appointed to help you and ask them to make the visit.

In I Peter 5:2, Peter exhorted the Elders to "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock". One of the first things Peter said was "feed". Sometimes the Lord's people get a little careless and they do not study as they should. Consequently, they do not have any bread to bring to the meeting. Therefore, a special responsibility rests on the shoulders of the Elders to see to it that there is bread for the meeting. Peter then added, "Taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint". Don't take the attitude, this is my obligation, but do it willingly. Let them know that you count it a privilege. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but by being ensamples to the flock." Don't be a lord over the little flock, just live before them what they should be. One way that people lord it over others is by instruction, saying, "don't do this, or don't do that". The greatest effect that any of us have over our brethren is the power of a good example. Paul said in another place that he wanted to live so that others would be provoked to emulation, or to be like him and to have what he had. When we take heed to ourselves as we should, that makes us an ensample, which is much better than a lecture. The word 'ensample' which is used here is different from the word 'example'.

The word 'example' refers to the original, and the word 'ensample' refers to a copy of the original. We all recognize that we only have one example in this fellowship, and that is Christ. But, we can allow the Lord to so work in our lives the virtues of Christ so that like Paul said: "You follow me even as I follow Christ". In the building profession the architect draws up the original plans. Those plans are called the example. The builders may make a number of copies of it so that the plumbers can have one and the electricians one, etc. These are called 'ensamples'. They are all copies of that architect's original drawing. I was talking to one of our friends one day who is an architect. He said the original drawing was kept in a safe. No one sees it, but it is kept there for safe keeping. The people working on the job never see the original but they know what it is like because they are working from an exact copy. Christ, our original example, is now in Heaven. No one sees him, but as we are conformed to the image of Christ, they can tell what he is like by what they see in us. That is the way that God intended it to be. When we are that kind of an ensample it is easy for the flock to have something that they can safely follow.

When we think of Jesus as our example, we think of him in his example in prayer. Jesus prayed his long prayers in private. He prayed his short prayers in public. That is a good example for us also to follow. Jesus spent all night in prayer to God, but in public he prayed briefly. He prayed one time: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always." That doesn't sound like much of a prayer, but that is what he was thankful for at the time. He was so thankful that God heard him every time he cried in distress. It would be good for us to condense our prayers in the meeting so that everyone in the meeting will have time for their part. I knew of a home in Spokane. When the Elder and his wife purchased that home, the older workers arranged for the church to remain in the home as it had been. One of the first concerns that this Elder and his wife had was that although there were about 40 in that meeting, just a few took up all the time praying, and others took up all the time testifying. There were many in the meeting that never had a chance to take part. The Elder said to his wife, "We won't say anything about this. We will just set an example for them". So when they prayed, they prayed very briefly but very effectively, and when they testified, they testified very briefly but with real bread in it. It wasn't long until others began to follow their ensample, and it wasn't long until all 40 were taking part in both prayer and testimony, and the meeting was over well within the limit of time. That is what Peter encouraged the Elders to do. Set the right example before the flock just like Jesus did in his day. That is what will make you an ensample to the flock.

There is another thing that the Scripture teaches us to do and that is to meditate on our prayers before the meeting just as we meditate on our testimonies. If a person goes to a meeting with something definite in our hearts to thank God for and something definite to testify about, you have a real godly effect then upon the others in the meeting. It is nice to just pause before the meeting to ask yourself the question, "What am I the most thankful for, and what do I feel the most in need of?" With that in our heart, it helps us to pray briefly, originally and effectively each time.

I would like to mention another thing about this matter of prayer and testimony in the meeting. When you pray in a meeting, make sure that your voice is loud and clear enough so that everyone in the room can hear you. There seems to be a feeling that often creeps in among us that we should modify our voice when we pray. There is nothing in the Scripture that suggests that. I often feel badly when someone prays or testifies in a low voice and half of the people in the meeting fail to get the benefit of what is being said. My hearing is not as keen as it used to be, but I still hear better in the meeting than most of the folks who are there. I know that when I cannot catch all that is said, the older people in the meeting are not getting it either. They are the ones who need it. They are living in the final trials of life and they need all the help they can get out of the meeting. Paul said, "Consider one another". This is one way in which we can be considerate. You do not need to shout, but you can speak loud enough so that all in the meeting can get the full benefit of what you are praying and testifying about.

There is something else I wish we could do something about. It is this matter of saying "amen" following the prayers and testimonies. They do this in most of the countries. After a brother gives his testimony it is good to hear a little "amen" to assure that person that their testimony was helpful. A man from New Zealand was in a meeting of ours not long ago. After the meeting, with tears in his eyes, he asked the Elder what he said wrong in his testimony. The Elder said there was nothing wrong with what he had to say. This man replied, "No one said 'amen' after I finished speaking, and I felt that my testimony was not in order." Just a little 'amen' shows we appreciate what they have shared. It is a little word of encouragement when a person says 'amen'. It is just saying, "I heartily endorse what you have said." It makes me feel good when I hear someone say a little 'amen' after my part. This is a little thing that Elders and their wives can be an example to the flock in. These are things that helped in the New Testament fellowship and they still do today. I hope we will all feel responsible to make every meeting what it should be.

There is another part of the meeting that we feel is very important. It is the part where we partake of the bread and wine. I suppose you all understand that it is nice to have the emblems in the center of the room when this can be arranged, just to remind everyone that Christ is the center of this meeting. We do not want to make a great formality of this. One older worker said, "We could be so taken up with the formality that we would miss the reality of what the bread and wine is intended to mean." It is nice when each one recognizes that they have the privilege of expressing thanks for either the bread or the wine in the meeting. In this way, no one or two would feel responsible each time. We would like anyone in the meeting, who has an understanding, to feel free to express their thanks for the communion.

What are we going to do with what is left over after all have partaken? I remember one time asking an older brother about this. His reply was there are no rules or no law about how the emblems are disposed of. In the Old Testament Passover Feast, which was a forerunner of our fellowship meeting, if there was anything left over it was burnt with fire. And, if there was anything left over of the drink offering it was poured out on the ground. It would be nice if what is left over from the communion could be disposed of in this way. This is not a ruling, but it is a respectable way to take care of the disposal of the emblems. If there is anything left of the bread it is good to burn it with fire. If there is anything left of the wine it is good to pour it upon the ground. In some places in city life this cannot be done. We tell them it is not mandatory, but I think if there is any left over, it is good to do so if it is possible. It is sacred to us in that it has reminded us again of the life and death of Christ who has made all of this possible.

These three chapters explain the ideal for the Elder and his wife. I certainly would encourage every Elder and his wife to read them together frequently. We would also encourage every young couple to read these chapters together and pray that the Lord will work into your lives the qualifications that would enable you to some day fill that place. We certainly would encourage every young couple to pray together and study together, just as we do. This will keep your home united and it will help you to keep the spirit and atmosphere in the home as it should be. We would like you to prepare yourselves so that if an old Elder should pass away you would be ready to step in and fill the gap. It is not that you are looking for a place of recognition, but that you see the privilege of looking after the little flock, and you have made yourselves ready to step into that privilege.

If you would like, please read from time to time Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." This helps us all very much to take heed to ourselves. Just make sure that you are an ensample. Just make sure that you are doing the right thing before that little flock so that everybody in the church would like to have the same spirit that you have and possess the same example that you have. The greatest power that anyone can have is the power of example. Just live as close to Christ as you can. He is our example in everything. It is interesting to notice as we read the gospels over, the many things that Jesus did just to leave an example so that we would know how to handle each situation that we might face.

We would like to tell you again how much you mean to us. Not only when we are on the other side of the sea, but also when we are in other parts of the field. It is comforting to know that we have partners that are watching over the flock, and that we have fellow laborers who are helping to carry the load. This is the only group of people in the world where the Elders and the ministry and the people are pulling together. This is possible because we are having fellowship with the Lord himself, and when we are having fellowship with him we are all enjoying fellowship with one another.

Sydney Holt
Elder's Meeting (Coeur d'Alene Field)
May 24, 1991

Hymn #245 "Sing to me the songs of Zion"

Most of you have never attended a meeting like this, and it is rather an informal meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to help strengthen the bond and fellowship between the ministry and the elders, or bishops, and the church. Philippians 1:1, Paul is writing to the Christians. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." It mentions the ministry, the saints, the bishops and the deacons.

Some of us have been called into the ministry. The rest of you have been called to be saints. Among the saints, there are those who have been called to be elders. The word "elder" is a general term. There are elder workers and elder saints, as well as bishops who are often called elders. Bishops are backed up by deacons. There were no provisions in those days for the widows and needy, so the deacons looked after these. Today we often refer to the elder as the one who leads the meeting. The deacon is the back up for the elder.

God has planned that the elders are subject to the ministry, and the ministry to Christ, and Christ to the Father. The biblical order is that those in the ministry are there because God called us into the ministry; not because our parents wanted us to be workers, or because we couldn't do anything else with our lives. Like Jesus calling those fisherman to leave their nets and fishing trade. He said, "I will make you to become fishers of men."

It is the same with those who are called to be elders or bishops. When you are chosen to be an elder, you don't know a lot about taking care of the church. You learn to have a love for those in the church, praying for them and caring for them. You grow into your place as an elder. The ministry appoints the elders. The religious world has this in reverse. The lay members decide who will be the elders and the elders decide who they will hire to be their preacher. And if the preacher does not please the people, he is out of a job.

Philemon talks about an elder, his wife, and his son. In an English course in school we studied letters, and the teacher said there is not a better example of what a letter should be than this book of Philemon. That was an interesting statement. A loving wife was a help to Philemon, a meeting in his home and a son in the ministry. God planned that the husband and wife in a home should be a type of Christ and the church. Verses 22-25 of Ephesians 5, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" Isn't it a nice picture of Christ and the church. He loved the church and gave himself for the church. The husband should love his wife and give himself for her. The wife should be in subjection to the husband as the church is to Christ.

I Tim. 2:1-13 "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve." This is a home situation. Sometimes it is easy for the wife to get ahead of the husband. That is not God's planning. The wife plays a very important part in the meeting in the home if she keeps in her place.

In that first verse of Philemon, Paul speaks of Philemon as a "fellowlabourer" – not a fellowlabourer in the ministry, but in the capacity of a saint. We in the ministry can invite people door to door and often they don't come at all. But you who are working on the job and in the neighborhood—it is a wonderful thing when someone sees your life and wants to know what this is all about. You become fellowlabourers with the ministry. We can be fellowlabourers by praying before a gospel meeting. We need you, and you need us.

Philemon verse 17 speaks of Philemon as a "partner." It is a wonderful thing if there is a true partnership. You share in the profit and you share in the losses. One partner can carry on when the other has to be away and be trusted with the same care as if the other was present. Often we in the ministry have to be away from our fields for conventions, special meetings etc. It is a wonderful thing to know elders are there taking care of the flock. We sorrow and rejoice together.

Verse 7 speaks of Philemon as "brother." That is a closer relationship than a partner or a fellowlabourer. We are brothers and sisters in God's family. I would feel that the influence in Philemon's home helped their young son to think of the ministry. I often find parents with a child in the work live closer to the ministry. It is always special for me to be in the home of parents of workers.

I Tim. 3:1-13 gives the qualifications for elders and deacons. Also in Titus 1:5-9 and I Peter 5:1-3. You may feel, "I can't measure up to these standards." However, this is the ideal. We don't always find someone who meets all these qualifications. We would encourage all elders, bishops and deacons, along with their wives, to read these scriptures often.

In Acts 20 we have an elders' meeting. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. His mission at Ephesus was the longest mission recorded that Paul ever had. He was anxious to talk to the elders and he had them come down to him. Verses 28-31:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

This gives the details of Paul's meeting with the elders. The instruction he gave was "take heed to yourselves." He gave the same to Timothy. Whether in the ministry, or elders, or saints, our first responsibility is to be right with God ourselves.

Ezra 7:10 "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments." This is the right order. To learn, to do, and then to teach. This is the order Paul instructed the elders. "Take heed to yourselves." Be right ourselves, then we are in a position to help others. We appoint those we want to be bishops and deacons, but it is the Holy Spirit that makes you a bishop or elder. "Feed the church of God." To be a feeder you don't have to be a long speaker in the meeting. There are some who always have bread for a meeting. It is nice if the elder can be that way.

One man who was an elder had a job for the government as a safety inspector where he spoke to many groups of people and he had no problem doing it. But in his own little meeting, he had trouble speaking—only a few words, but it was bread.

"Which he hath purchased with His own blood." Each child of God has been purchased with Christ's blood, and we don't want to misuse any of God's people.

Verse 29 speaks of "grievous wolves." This is an outside influence. Then it speaks "of your own selves," and this is from within. Those who get wrong and try to influence others.

Paul gave elders instructions to "watch." Those in the ministry are "watchmen"—not "policemen." When the watchman warns people, then he is not responsible for what happens. If he doesn't warn people, then he is responsible. Paul told the elders to "watch."

Now we will get to the questions:

1. How can one know for sure if he has been chosen as an elder or just as one to lead the Sunday morning meeting?

The ministry chooses you to be an elder, but the Holy Spirit makes you an elder, when you learn to love the little flock. When one is sick, spiritually or naturally, and you visit them. Showing no partiality—visiting the weakest, as well as the strongest, and loving the flock.

2. The question of single or divorced people being elders.

It says "husband of one wife." The "husband of one wife," means being "faithful to your one wife." It does not mean that you have to have a wife to be an elder. It is nice when the elder has a helpmate. It is not the best for a divorced person to be an elder. The reason is because this is a problem we are facing on every hand in this day. There are even divorced people in the work. But it is not the best for someone in that position to give advice to people about divorce. It is best not to have a divorced person as an elder under most circumstances.

3. What does I Tim. 3:6 mean? "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Verses 6 & 7 are giving instructions for those who would be chosen as elders. The devil does not care how he destroys a person. Sometimes he lifts them up and fills them with pride. (A novice is one newly come to the faith, and making him an elder could easily go to his head.) Others he makes feel there is no hope for them because of not having a good testimony with their work.

4. If for some reason an elder cannot be in his meeting, and his appointed assistant cannot be there either, and there are no workers in the area, [what] guidelines should be used to appoint someone else to fill in?

This would rarely happen, but the elder could appoint a man whom he would feel could lead the meeting in the absence of him and his backup elder. If there is not a man, then an older saint lady.

5. How should a meeting be led by the elder?

Our meetings are made up of the hymns, prayer, testimony and the emblems. Some hymns are gospel, some to open the meeting with, some for prayers, and some for the emblems. Jack Carroll liked to have the elder choose the first hymn to get the meeting off on a good note. There are many people who choose right hymns. The elder is in the driver's seat if a meeting is getting too long or draggy or in a rut. Some people always come to meeting with a hymn, and if no one else has a hymn, give theirs. They give out hymns more often than others because of this. The elder can call on someone to choose a hymn. It is always nice for all to have a part choosing hymns. The elder can ask for someone who hasn't chosen a hymn for a while to choose one. It is nice when the testimonies are not too lengthy. If a meeting is getting too draggy, the elder can get up and speak himself. This often helps them to not waste the time.

The emblems. There are hymns appropriate for before and after the emblems. All that take the emblems may take part in praying for the emblems. We don't want taking the emblems to become a form. Gladys Porteous said once that she asked herself, "What can I do that will help me not to let taking the emblems become form?" She said she decided she would read about the crucifixion before every Sunday morning meeting. I decided to do it, and have done so. I also like, besides the Gospels, to read Exodus 12 about the Passover; Lev. 16 about the day of atonement; David's account in Psalm 22; Isaiah's account in Isa. 53, and about taking the emblems in 1 Corin. 11. The emblems are covered for sanitation, but uncovered before we give thanks so our thoughts can be on the sacrifice of Christ. The bread—sometimes we take a tiny little pinch. The bread represents our willingness to walk in the light as Christ is in the light, and we don't want to be skimpy with that. It is nice to take off a nice piece of bread. After the meeting is over and the emblems are removed from the room, it is nice to sit quietly in reverence.

6. Should elders always pray and speak last?

Not always. There is no rule that they have to. Sometimes it is nice when they pray last because all know the prayers are ended.

7. Is there a guideline on how often elders should pick a hymn, and if so, for what parts of the meeting?

No. Perhaps the elder would choose the first hymn in a meeting, or the one for the emblems, but better for the elder to get everyone involved in choosing hymns for a meeting rather than choosing most of them himself. It would be a shame if elders chose all the hymns.

8. Who can choose a hymn for a meeting?

Anyone of God's children can choose a hymn. It is too bad when a hymn is chosen that is not appropriate. Sometimes a child wants to choose a hymn. Children should talk to their parents, and if the hymn is appropriate, the parent can choose it for him.

9. Is there a way to graciously handle it when meetings are getting too long or when some individual talks too long?

Well, if there is, please share it with me! Sunday morning meetings should be over not later than 12:00, and for Wednesdays one hour is best. Sometimes when a meeting gets too long, a Worker or elder closes the meeting without taking part themselves. Some people cannot express in a few words whatever they have to tell you. Sometimes people living alone speak a long time because of not having anyone through the week to share these things with. If you run into difficulties, tell us and maybe we can help you. One worker once said, "Come to the meeting with bread. Some come with a great big sheaf of wheat, then they thresh it and grind it and mix it and bake it and serve it, which takes so long. If we come with bread, it's condensed and tasty."

10. How is it determined by scripture the length of a Sunday a.m. meeting?

The Sunday a.m. meeting is a perpetuation of the Passover in Exodus 12. Exodus 12:11 "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover." They were not to

just sit at their leisure, but to eat it in haste; getting ready to travel on. We eat in haste, and get ready to go out and live it. I never like to see a Sunday morning meeting go past 12:00. Sometimes there are persons from divided homes, and they need to get home to fix dinner for their unprofessing husbands. Sometimes there are small children, and it is difficult if the meeting goes too long.

11. Having the spirit in the forefront of the meeting rather than the mechanics. Appreciate anything that could help to assure the spirit there.

This is true. I will tell about a man from the East Coast who moved out West. We found out later he was crossways with most everyone in the East. He didn't like people standing to give their testimony and he got sour with the passing of time. He was told he didn't have to stand, he could sit and it would be fine. He didn't want that; he wanted everyone to sit. He came to convention day late and entered as Rasmus Prip was speaking. Rasmus Prip did a lot of traveling in his ministry and he spoke several languages. He was speaking about the differences he had noticed in God's people in his travels. In some places all the women wore hats. In other places only the women who were going to speak wore hats. In one place all stood to pray. Others knelt to pray and others bowed. Some sat to speak and others stood. There were all these differences, and yet the same Spirit. It was more a proof that God was in it than if all did it the same way. We could make rules and you could conform to them, but it would not make the right spirit. That man left the meeting mad, and he died outside the way.

12. If there are no workers or meetings in the area, and a person who is not professing asks to attend the Sunday a.m. meeting, how should it be handled?

I Corin. 14:23-25 It speaks of an outsider in the meeting. It is all right for an outsider to come to a meeting. I know of some professing today, and even one in the ministry, and it was in a Sunday morning meeting that they were convinced of the truth. Someone invited a Seventh Day Adventist to a Wednesday night meeting in our field this year, and he used the meetings to speak long and was off-track. We finally had to tell him that he was welcome on Wednesday nights, but we were going to ask him not to take part. He quit coming. If you invite someone, tell them they are welcome, but just to listen. It is much easier to deal with this beforehand than after they have been taking part.

13. Many times we sing part of a hymn before the emblems and part after. Other times a different one after. What kinds of hymns are best for the end of the meeting?

The guideline for choosing a hymn should be any hymn that would remind us of Calvary and the sacrifice of Jesus to help us center our thoughts on Christ. There is a section in our hymn book (under Bread and Wine in the back of our book) that is good, but there are other hymns throughout the book that are also appropriate.

14. A comment on praying before the emblems would be appreciated. Most of the time the same few will pray. Many times because others leave it for them. Sometimes even our heartiest women will almost never pray. Also your thoughts on asking a specific person to pray for them.

There are some who give thanks nearly every meeting, because others don't. Every one who takes the emblems should have the responsibility and privilege of praying for the emblems. We appreciate our women who don't push ahead of the men, but it is nice for all to take part. It is fine for the elder to ask someone by name to pray for the emblems. Sometimes we are in a home, and at the table the man of the house says, "Will one of you please give thanks." The younger worker doesn't, of course, because he doesn't want to be out of his place. The older worker often gets asked, so he is trying to kick the younger worker under the table to get him to go ahead and pray. It is awkward, and it would be nice of the man of the house just said, "Don, would you give thanks, please." It is fine for the elder to call on someone by name to give thanks for the emblems and thus get everyone involved.

15. Should elders hand the emblems to people who do not profess, who aren't yet baptized, or who do not take part or take the emblems?

The emblems should be passed to everyone. The elder starts the emblems around and they pass from one to another. If there are strangers in the meeting, it would be nice if the elder mentioned I Corin. 11:23-29 where Paul wrote about partaking of the emblems. The only one I would not pass the emblems to is a small child who might spill the wine or drop the bread.

16. Is it necessary for a person to wait until they are baptized before partaking of the emblems?

The Children of Israel had the blood of the lamb over the door and on each side of the door. They partook of the lamb and journeyed, being led by the cloud (Holy Spirit) before coming to the Red Sea, which is a type of baptism. If a person is willing for the separation necessary, but has not yet had the opportunity for baptism, they are free to take of the emblems. It is best for children to wait until they are baptized because often they profess very young and don't understand the seriousness of partaking. I was 10-1/2 when I made my choice and two years later talked to Tharold about being baptized. He encouraged me to wait until I was a little older and I've always been glad for that advice. I was baptized when I was 14-1/2, and then partaking of the emblems had a real meaning to me.

17. What is the elder's responsibility when he knows people are taking of the emblems and smoking or drinking?

If you are a watchman, you do have a responsibility to warn such a person. If you know, and not just hearsay, the Bible would teach that you should go to them. However, the spirit you go with could crush them or help them get victory. You could point out the scripture in I Corin. 11:29 "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

18. The "common cup." We break tradition in having grape juice instead of wine, why not break the tradition and have individual servings of the juice to prevent disease?

It is not breaking tradition to use grape juice instead of wine. If you know your bible, it doesn't say "wine." It says "fruit of the vine." Grape juice is just as much the fruit of the vine as wine is. It would be breaking tradition to have individual servings of the juice. Jesus didn't introduce it this way. Anyone with a cold or with something that might be contagious is encouraged to pass the cup by without partaking of it. Then the elder, who is watching, brings it back for them to partake of last.

19. Should we wait til the emblems are out of the room before gathering up our books after the meeting?

Yes. It is a mark of reverence if we all sit while the elder takes the emblems from the room. Willis Prop likened it to when he attended the funeral of brother workers killed in a car wreck in California. The funeral was held in the convention tent. The casket with the body was in front of the platform, and the family went in first to view the body, then the workers, then the Lord's people. There was silence. After the service, there was silence. The pall bearers left carrying the casket, followed by the family, then the workers, then the people. This silence showed everyone's respect. In meeting Sunday morning, we are very conscious that there has been a death as we gather around the emblems, and it is good to wait in silence when the emblems are taken out at the end of the meeting.

20. How are the bread and wine disposed of?

In the Old Testament, the part that was not used was burned with fire. Exodus 12:10. The blood was poured on the ground and covered with dust. Lev. 17:13, and Deut. 12:16. In a home in our field where there is a meeting, there is a fire place. Every Sunday morning there is a little bunch of paper in that fireplace, with some kindling on top. After the meeting, after everyone has gone, the elder places the bread on top of that kindling and lights the fire. That seems appropriate. And the juice is poured out on the ground.

21. What is the elder's responsibility about reading announcements after meeting when the meeting is in a widow's home?

It is the elder's responsibility to give announcements.

What kind of announcements are acceptable and unacceptable after meeting?

Announcements about gospel meetings, meeting changes, funerals and someone sick or in the hospital are acceptable.

Announcements about get-togethers and birthdays would best be done at another time.

22. What scripture is there for union meetings? Isn't it scriptural to have as many people as could eat a lamb (Old Testament)? Then why do we combine two or three meetings and then fret about the length of it?

Union meeting enables us to meet with people we don't normally meet with. This is very healthy for the Lord's people. Also, people with a regular Sunday morning meeting have one weekend of freedom to be away from home. Also, other couples get to have the privilege of meeting in their home. We established 6 new union meetings in the North Seattle field this year. They are all small, and it gave six young couples the privilege of meeting in their home who otherwise wouldn't have that privilege. They are all very happy. Union meetings need not be big. Some are, and we have encouraged the workers in this field to make more meetings so they won't be so large. As for scripture, I Corin. 14:23, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place..." Is that a union meeting? Or a convention?!

23. Touch on the importance of all showing up for meeting.

If we miss a meeting, we miss an appointment God has made for us. Some go on Sundays, but always miss Wednesdays. When I took an engineering course, I had more homework than I could possibly do. I didn't go to Wednesday night meetings as I felt I couldn't afford the time involved. Then we moved, and I started going Wednesdays, and found it didn't make any difference in my homework at all. It was then that I realized all I missed. Often babes find more help in a Wednesday study meeting than any other meeting.

24. Concerned about divorce and remarriage.

Well, we are concerned too. Mark 10:6-9 "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

It is very, very clear that God has planned that death is what should separate a couple. There was a woman whose husband gave her every reason to leave him. But she didn't, and years later, he professed and became a wonderful elder. She stuck with it and will have a great eternal reward for it. The influence of the world could easily creep in amongst us, lowering God's standard. Anyone who divorces and remarries is living in adultery and cannot have God's blessing.

25. Did Jesus have human nature such as we?

Luke 22:42 – Jesus' prayer in the garden, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." Two wills are spoken of here. The human will, and God's will; the one in conflict with the other. There is a difference between having a human nature and giving expression to that human nature. Jesus never gave vent to that.

Hymn #399 (In vain do the wise seek to pierce through the veil...)

Elders Meeting October 6, 1992

By Sydney Holt, Overseer of Washington State USA

In Philemon, verse 1 he is called a fellow laborer, in verse 17 he is called a partner and in verses 16 and 20 he is called a brother, yet he is an elder. Laborer, the ministry and elder working together; partner, each sharing in loss and gain; brother, a close relationship as

love holds the family together.

Elder's Meeting scriptural? See Acts 20:28-31. Take heed to self first. Then take heed to flock. Holy Ghost makes the elder. Feed the church of God. Be a feeder. All are purchased by blood of God through Jesus Christ. To speak against another is terrible as they are purchased by the blood of Christ.

Qualifications of elder or bishop can be found in 1 Tim.3; Titus 1; 1 Pet.5.

Questions:

1. How are meetings held? There is an order (which we follow). Lift your voice up so others can hear and enter into our prayers and testimonies.
 2. Spirit of meeting more important than mechanics. Yes, spirit very important. It is a must in the meeting.
 3. Who chooses hymns? Anyone professing may choose hymns. Possibly children may choose, but should be checked through their parents. Elders could also select certain people to choose hymns. Do not get into a rut. There are some who choose hymns very often.
 4. Length of meeting? Ex.12:11. Long testimonies put a damper on a meeting. (Stand up to be seen; speak out to be heard; sit down to be appreciated.)
 5. Better to have elder to talk to those who are long, etc.
 6. Illness: Then have workers tell where or what they ought to do. There should be the back-up man first, though.
 7. Unprofessing people taking care of home while elder gone? Then possible to scatter, but LET THE WORKERS KNOW!
 8. When cup is passed and one does not partake, then elder is to bring the cup back to that person. He should partake of it before taking it back though.
 9. If strife between members? 1 Cor. May be sometimes better to go to workers.
 10. Being late? This usually a habit so no matter what time meeting is to start they would still be the late ones. This is a personal matter that should be taken care of by the individuals.
 11. If elder cannot be in meeting and no one around, what guidelines? This was already answered.
 12. Notify elder if we will not be there or if we are bringing someone. CALL!
 13. If worker conducting meeting should elder say "Amen" audibly? Yes. He can also say "Amen" after each testimony.
 14. Strangers in Fellowship Meeting? 1 Cor.14:23-25. Strangers may attend, but best if they go to Gospel Meeting first. They can go to the Fellowship Meeting because the spirit may speak to them.
 15. When inviting anyone ask them as an observer and not to be taking part.
 16. If someone moves into town and comes to meeting (or calls about where meeting is being held) give directions to closest Sunday and Wednesday meeting to them and then tell them when the workers are back in area they may change them as they like to keep the meetings balanced.
 17. Uncovered emblems? Uncover the emblems before singing the hymn preceding passing the bread. Remain in seats until he returns with or without announcements.
 18. Go ahead and uncover emblems when workers have meeting. No need to feel awkward. Lu.22:17 is reference to the first cup.
 19. Lu.22:19-20 is where Jesus instituted the bread and wine. This last supper was the night before the Passover as Jesus knew he would be killed at the time of the killing of the Passover lamb. Col. 2:14 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances..." He drank the first cup to blot out the Old Testament covenant and brought it to a close. The second cup introduced the bread and cup of the New Testament—our emblems as we have them today. To Sydney the bread signifies "I am willing," and the cup signifies "I'm sorry, but very thankful for Jesus dying for us."
- (Sydney recommended we each read about the crucifixion in the various places in the Bible, or to even read a hymn that refers to Jesus' crucifixion either Saturday night or Sunday morning.)
- Also, no cracked wheat should be used for the bread. There should be no whole grain in it as the life of Jesus was crushed. (At Ronan I heard that a grain of wheat in a slice of bread could say "I am in the bread" but if there is none it could say "I am of the bread.")
20. Have emblems in the room before the meeting. Be reverent!
 21. Who should pray for the emblems? Anyone who is baptized and is taking part. The elder may select anyone to do it.
 22. Don't just take a tiny bit of bread. Take a portion.
 23. Elders should pass the emblems and not pass anyone up for any reason. 1 Cor. 11:28-32.
 24. Each individual decides if he/she is worthy or not.
 25. Should elder take emblems last? He should partake before passing to those who did not partake.
 26. If heart is hard then taking emblems is wrong. AIDS? They should always be last.

27. Wine in some countries and grape juice here? Both are "fruit of the vine."
28. How dispose of bread of wine? In Old Testament it was to be burned and the blood was to be poured on the ground and covered with dust. Same today.
29. Wait until emblems out of room before gathering up books.
30. How promptly should we leave after the meeting? Greet everyone and then leave. Don't tarry.
31. Sprinkling of blood? In Old Testament it was all "types" and "shadows". Lev.16. Number seven is God's number—perfect redemption.
32. John 1:18. "No man hath seen God at any time..."
33. Giving to charities? This is a personal thing. Give according to the need that you see and according to your own personal feelings.
34. Last Days? That is the time from when Jesus died and when he will be coming back again. Just be ready.
35. Sabbath? Col. 2:16-17. Shadow is never real thing. It just points to real thing. Heb. 4 tells us what this shadow is. We are following the real thing, Jesus Christ, when we cease from our own works.
36. Number 5? This represented the human effort perfected with divine strength. Five loaves feeding 5,000, etc.
37. Millennium reign? Read Matt. 24 and 25. Just be ready. Watch and pray. Also read Rev. 20. All the faithful who died in Christ and those faithful when he returns will be partaking of the "Feast of the Bridegroom" while Satan is flourishing. Judgment Day would still be coming up as we all leave either a good or evil influence behind which adds to our record for that day.

Fellowship Meeting Guidelines (no date or speaker given)

Our purpose in planning these gatherings and in sending this summary home with you is that the little meetings you attend Sunday and Wednesday could be as helpful as possible. We have appreciated the meetings in this field. Many times we have felt we have received so much when we have taken so little. There is always a possibility that our meetings could be more rich and more inspirational. This is our aim.

We need the meetings. The statement was made at our conventions, "Maybe we don't realize how much the little meetings have to do with our preservation. Few or maybe none could survive without the meetings except it be circumstances beyond our control that cut us off." We also heard, "How we spend the Lord's day has a lot to do with our prosperity." When you feel the effort is too great to go to meeting, think of how you would feel if you couldn't go to meeting. Week after week...and no possibility of going to meeting. May God help us to appreciate the meeting.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:28 "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." When Jesus returns, God's people will be drawn to Him as the eagles are drawn to a carcass. Each Sunday morning, God wants to draw us to the resurrected Christ. If we are faithful in being drawn each Sunday morning, we'll be, can we say, "practicing", to respond to the "drawing" when Jesus returns.

Maybe it would be appropriate to mention now that how we spend Saturday evening is important. It was good for me to realize recently that Saturday night is special because from about 5:00 our time Saturday evening, fellow Christians around the world begin to meet. For the sake of unity of God's people around the world, it would be commendable if our activities Saturday evening didn't detract from their worship service.

It contributes to the helpfulness of the meeting if there is quietness before the meeting. Therefore, it has been suggested that we be in our place at least 10 minutes before the meeting is to begin. Being in the meeting place at 10:20 makes it possible for you to sit quietly and reverently while our friends in the time zone to the east break bread. Thus we can add to the helpfulness of their meeting and again strengthen unity. Our friends to the west, when they gather, can do the same for us.

We want to mention attendance. The first testimony you give in the meeting is when you walk into that meeting. If you come regularly, your presence says, "This way of God means everything to me." If you don't come regularly, you're saying "This doesn't mean very much to me." You edify your brethren by first of all being in your place in the meeting. Sometimes our friends feel it isn't necessary to attend Wednesday night meetings regularly. We understand that there is shift work, human limitations, etc., but we do want to encourage you to be as regular as is at all possible. Often we fear because so many tendencies seem to be "contagious". If you don't attend, then someone else feels it isn't necessary for him to attend. Is this an area where you can sacrifice your time and your strength, your natural aspirations & later receive blessing?

When it is not possible to be at the meeting, it is "meeting courtesy" to phone and let the elder or the one in whose home you are meeting, know that you won't be able to attend. This applies to both Sunday and Wednesday meetings. There is often a lot of effort put into setting up the meeting room—especially if the meeting is a large one—and knowing who is going to be there is more helpful than most of us understand. When we're in a meeting and someone doesn't come, and we haven't heard why, we find it a battle to keep from thinking "I wonder what's happened"? Knowing puts our minds at ease. I'm sure the elders of the meetings have the same experience. Letting the elder know would also apply if you have extra company to bring along.

The purpose of our meeting is to worship. One meaning of worship is "our whole being going out to God". The chorus of hymn number 243 describe: "worship". "Gladly yielding all, moved by love divine." We come to meeting to give ourselves again because of the love and gratitude in our hearts.

You know that it is good to try to aim to keep the meeting within the hour. We don't want to lose the spirit of the meeting in an attempt to keep it within the hour, but neither do we want to lose the helpfulness that can come from "bringing the kernel". Little children and parents find it difficult if the meeting gets long. Some older folks in lodges may miss their dinner if the meeting gets long.

One cause of long meetings is long prayers. If someone in the meeting has already prayed for those who are not there, we need not repeat that petition because we have already added our "Amen" to their petition. The prayer time in meeting rises up to God as one continuous prayer all our prayers blending into one, so there is no need to repeat. Some of our older brothers have encouraged us to prepare for our part in prayer the way we prepare for our part in testimony. The suggestion was made that we think of something we are especially thankful for that week and something we especially need that week, and utter these two things in our prayer in the meeting. Most of our meetings in the city presently are large and because of this even more effort is needed to ensure brevity. If the prayers are long, it is almost impossible to keep the meeting from being long. In the size of our meetings presently, a prayer of two or three petitions is appropriate.

Our experience has been that long testimonies take away from the meeting. The reading of many verses can be the cause of long testimonies. Pauses between testimonies makes a meeting longer, and also has a "deadening" effect. The most important testimony in the meeting is Jesus' testimony—in the bread and wine. Therefore it is only respectful to allow 10 minutes for that part of the meeting – so it need not be rushed.

We will be all our lives learning the greatness and the significance of the breaking of bread. It is good to remember this part of the meeting when we prepare for the meeting. We could do that by reading a chapter (i.e. 1 Cor. 11:17-34) that is applicable, and by examining ourselves. 1 Cor. 11:29 is a very good verse. If we don't discern the Lord's body, we partake unworthily. If we do discern the Lord's body, we partake worthily. One meaning of discern is "to see as distinct from other objects". If we get a vision of the standard in Christ, if we compare ourselves to the standard, if we make a genuine effort in following that standard – then we partake worthily.

We were told at convention that Jesus established the Fellowship Meeting on the last night of His life under the shadow of the cross in the travail of His soul. May we make the effort that Jesus made in the interest of the Fellowship Meeting. We hope these few suggestions will be profitable to you and your meeting. Try and read them from time to time so they can be kept in mind.

Don'ts for Fellowship Meetings (no author or date given)

Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together on the first day of the week.

Don't come too early and talk on unprofitable subjects and so unfit yourself for helping in the meetings.

Don't come too late; this always hinders.

Don't have too long a meeting. Good mtgs. are often held within the hour.

Don't pray too long in the meeting. Long prayers are for the secret place. Pray in such a way that all may hear and be edified.

Don't preach too long; it is not the multitude of words that counts with God or man. Short messages are more helpful. Say much in a few words.

Don't read too much; reading much in mtgs. is often a proof of reading little at home. To comment on a few verses that have spoken to you is the best.

Don't ask questions in meetings.

Don't speak more than once in meeting; if after you have sat down you remember things you have left out, wait until another time to speak.

Don't be looking at your own little sermon while others are trying to speak; listen attentively. You can make it very hard for others or very easy. Be a sympathetic listener.

Don't have long pauses between testimonies; make up your mind that as far as you're concerned there will be no long pauses.

Don't have meeting where children are not under control.

Don't allow the phone to ring during meeting.

Don't keep a dog that will bark at everything.

Don't forget that you are responsible for trying to get others saved.

Don't freeze out strangers; give them a hearty welcome.

Don't preach or pray at them. Conduct your meeting as if no strangers were present.

Don't be afraid to love one another heartily.

Read 1 Cor. 1 often.

Don't forget these hints.