

PASTORS AND ELDERS: CARING FOR THE CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

Leader's Guide

How to Use. This guide is intended to assist whoever is assigned to lead the teaching and training of pastors and elders at each regularly scheduled board of elders meeting. Before each meeting both pastor(s) and elders should read a chapter of the book *Pastors and Elders: Caring for the Church and One Another* and reflect on the questions at the end of the particular chapter assigned for that meeting.

PowerPoint. The leader may use this guide in preparation for a PowerPoint presentation to participants. The PowerPoint is intended to lead participants in the discussion of each chapter and in teaching and training along with the corresponding video vignette(s).

CHAPTER ONE

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Jesus [said], "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

—Matthew 28:18

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have commanded us to pray that You would send forth laborers into Your harvest. Of Your infinite mercy give us true teachers and ministers of Your Word who truly fulfill Your command and preach nothing contrary to Your holy Word. Grant that we, being warned, instructed, nurtured, comforted, and strengthened by Your holy Word, may do those things which are well pleasing to You and profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (119)¹

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- understand the difference between spiritual authority and power;
- identify on the basis of Scripture the authority given to pastors and elders;
- grow in our fellowship with Christ and one another, understanding that He is in charge and is working with us and for us and through us as His Word has its way in our lives.

¹ *Lutheran Service Book*, "Increase of the Holy Ministry," p. 306.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between spiritual authority and power?

Spiritual authority is an unlimited ability or commodity. You cannot exercise authority unless you are under authority. Authority cannot be taken. Someone else must give it to you. You exercise authority by authorizing others to act, not by keeping it to yourself. Authority grows with the delegation of authority to others. Political influence and power, on the other hand, is a limited ability or commodity. A person has power at the expense of someone else. I must disempower others in order to have it and keep it for myself. Those who lack authority use power. If you operate with power, then you have a constant battle with the other power people in the congregation. That leads to manipulation by the great power-monger: Satan. Operate with power and you are operating on Satan's terms. A good example of this would be to disregard or change the rules if the rules keep you from getting what you want.

2. How does Jesus exercise His authority in the Church?

Jesus exercises His authority through His Word. His words give and bestow what they say. For example, Jesus "rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' And the wind ceased, and there was great calm" (Mark 4:39). Jesus said to Lazarus who had been dead for four days, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43b). Lazarus came out of the tomb alive and well. Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room, "Peace be with you" (John 20:21), and the disciples had peace.

NOTE: Leaders may want to download and have available the LCMS statement on the role of elders in the congregation:

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=545> (p. 16);

and the elder's job description:

<http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1196> (p. 6).

3. What are elders authorized to do in the congregation?

Elders, as members of the priesthood of all believers, are authorized to be servants in the Church. The apostle Peter writes of all Christians, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. . . . Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover up for evil, but living as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:9, 16).

Strictly speaking, the word “elder” in the Bible (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17–19, Titus 1:5–9 and 1 Peter 5:1–4) refers to those who hold the pastoral office. What we commonly call “elders” today are laymen appointed to serve the congregation in its temporal affairs and to assist the pastor in administrative tasks. Later such men came to be known as the “deacons” (meaning “servants”). Scripture does not define the exact role of such deacons, only their qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8–13). Scripture gives them no special spiritual responsibilities in the congregation beyond those given to every Christian. While the office of pastor is divinely instituted and indispensable for the Church, the deacon is an optional office based on Apostolic and church custom. The deacon or elder is a position of lay-service, concerned with the temporal and administrative affairs of the congregation. In many congregations deacons or elders are also charged with oversight of the pastor. But, rightly understood according to Scripture, they exercise only that oversight given to every Christian in the congregation.²

4. *What is a pastor authorized to do in a congregation?*

Pastors ordained into the Office of the Public Ministry are authorized by God through the Church to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments according to the Word of God. The apostle Paul writes, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:1–2). Jesus said of one in this office, “The one who hears you hears Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me, and the one who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

² “The Role of Elders,” *LCMS FAQ: Worship/Congregational Life*, <http://www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=1196> (October 2011).

By the public ministry we mean the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered by order and in the name of a Christian congregation. Concerning this office we teach that it is a divine ordinance; that is, the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow-Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16, but they are also required, by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work, whose qualifications and official functions are exactly defined in Scripture, Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2.

Although the office of the ministry is a divine ordinance, it possesses no other power than the power of the Word of God, 1 Pet. 4:11; that is to say, it is the duty of Christians to yield unconditional obedience to the office of the ministry whenever, and as long as, the minister proclaims to them the Word of God, Heb. 13:17, Luke 10:16. If, however, the minister, in his teachings and injunctions, were to go beyond the Word of God, it would be the duty of Christians not to obey, but to disobey him, so as to remain faithful to Christ, Matt. 23:8. Accordingly, we reject the false doctrine ascribing to the office of the ministry the right to demand obedience and submission in matters which Christ has not commanded.³

5. *Why is it important to authorize others to work within the church?*

Failing to authorize and equip others for work in the congregation is a recipe for disaster. It robs the people of God in the congregation of the privilege and honor of serving the Lord in His Church. It takes the pastor away from the noble task of delivering the Lord's gifts of forgiveness, life, and peace to God's people. Sooner or later, the pastor will be crushed by the weight of trying to do everything in the church himself. Worse, he may begin to think that he is indispensable or come to resent the people he serves because they don't do what he would like them to do.

³ A *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod*, "Of the Public Ministry," (adopted 1932), pp. 9–11, <http://lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=415> (October 2011).

6. *What is the meaning of the robe and stole a pastor wears for the Divine Service?*

The robe and stole a pastor wears in the Divine Service beautifully illustrate whom the pastor represents, the extent of his authority, and what he is given to say. The robe covers the man and declares that the words he speaks are not his own. The stole, first placed around the neck of the pastor at his ordination, represents the vow the pastor made to faithfully preach and teach the word of God. At ordination, a pastor is given orders to say what the Lord says through this office of the public ministry.

NOTE: Leaders may want to refer to, and possibly have available, resources such as *The Altar Guild Manual* (Lutheran Service Book Edition), "Vestments for the Clergy," pp. 69–71 (CPH © 2008, item #15-5102); and/or a fuller presentation in *Gathered Guests* (2nd ed.), "Vestments in the Lord's Service: Dress for the Occasion," pp. 205–220 (CPH © 2009, item #53-1155).

7. *What are the instruments a pastor is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls?*

The pastor has instruments that he is authorized to use for the care and cure of souls, namely, the Lord's Word and Sacraments. The Word of God consists of both Law and Gospel. Like the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) used by a medical doctor, the Law's main purpose is to identify what is wrong with us. In other words, the main purpose of the Law is to show us our sin. The Law is not an end in and of itself. It serves the Gospel just as a doctor's diagnosis of a medical problem serves the process of healing. When our sin is brought to light, that is, confessed, it is identified, and there is a desire for it to be removed.

The other two functions of the Law are to keep evil in check and to guide us in the living of the Christian life. The purpose of the Gospel is to forgive our sin, to remove it from our very being. This is done through the absolution, the declaration of the Lord's forgiveness. Just as a stethoscope is an invaluable instrument in a doctor's medical bag, one of the most important tools in the pastor's "spiritual medical bag" is private confession and absolution. In confession and absolution the source of our pain and agony, namely sin, is dealt with by the authority of Jesus Christ. The penitent is asked, "Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?"

With the acknowledgement that it is, indeed, God's forgiveness being bestowed, the pastor places his hands on the head of the penitent and says, "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." There is also a miracle medicine of immortality found within the pastor's spiritual medical bag. It is called the Lord's Supper, the very body and blood of Jesus Christ that the pastor puts into the mouth, heart, and life of a penitent for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith.

NOTE: Leaders may want to refer to, and possibly have available, the order for Individual Confession and Absolution in *Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 292–93 and/or the rite for Corporate Confession and Absolution, pp. 290–91.

8. *What problems may develop if a pastor or elder does something that he is not authorized to do?*

Infighting may develop between pastors, elders, and others, and many may be offended and hurt by being stripped of what they have been given to do by someone who may not be as well equipped to carry out those responsibilities.

9. *What should pastors and elders do before changing a certain practice within the church? Why?*

Pastors and elders need to continually ask themselves whether they are acting according to the authority of God's Word or something else when changing certain practices within the church. Some practices may have the opposite effect of what was intended and may inadvertently lead people away from the Word of God.

10. *Why is it dangerous to make decisions within the congregation on the basis of people's feelings?*

In our contemporary society, the authority for many is the power of one's feelings. The thought is that if something feels right, you should just do it. Truth is often defined merely by one's subjective feelings even when those feelings contradict objective reality. A member of a congregation said this to her pastor about what she believed: "Pastor, I don't care if it's not true. What matters is that it makes me feel good." We live in a culture where many deny objective

realities, even the reality of our sin and death. Feelings seem to be the trump card for many these days. It is important to understand that even though feelings are real, they can be influenced or even manipulated by information that is false.

11. *Review the vows your pastor made at his ordination. Have you ever knowingly or unknowingly asked your pastor to do something that would violate his ordination vows?*

Answers may vary. Examples may include asking a pastor to overlook certain sins, telling him to treat certain congregation members differently than others, or pressuring him to do what you want instead of what is best for the congregation.

NOTE: The vows made by a pastor at ordination, and affirmed at subsequent installations, can be found in *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, pp. 160–66 (ordination) and pp. 178–79 (installation). It also might be useful to review what a congregation vows in regard to the honor, care, and nurture of its pastor (pp. 169 and 180, respectively).

View and discuss video vignettes for Introduction and Chapter 1.

CHAPTER TWO

ELDERS AT WORK

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

—1 Thessalonians 5:12–18

OPENING PRAYER

God, You are the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We meet You in Word and Sacrament, as You come to us with grace and blessing. We thank You for calling us into Your kingdom. We thank You for allowing us to be members of this congregation. We thank you for appointing us as workers with the saints in this place. We need Your power to work effectively and to overcome the forces of evil that frustrate Your saving intentions. We seek Your grace to care for people as You do, and to endure hostility and misunderstanding in our efforts to help. Overcome in us the temptation to adopt the ways of the world for the work of Your kingdom in order to enjoy success. You justify us by Your grace; now sanctify us also according to Your great mercy, in Christ Jesus, our Lord.⁴

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- recognize how important it is for the Word of God to be a part of our everyday lives;
- learn what elders are authorized to do in service to the Lord and His Church;
- be faithful in carrying out the tasks we have been given to do in the congregation.

⁴ Adapted from Kenneth W. Rogahn, *Begin with Prayer: Openings for Church Group Meetings* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 34.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. *Why is the worship and devotional life of elders of utmost importance?*

Elders are given much to do in the church, but the most important work of elders takes place in their devotional lives. They need to be in the Word daily so that their lives are shaped and formed by the Word of God instead of the siren voices of a fallen world. Too often, what we do in the church is influenced or even directed by the word of a fallen humanity instead of the Word of the Lord. If the Word of God is not a part of the daily diet of both elders and pastor(s), the way of the congregation will begin to look more and more like the way of a fallen world.

2. *What are the qualifications of an elder?*

Not everyone is qualified to be an elder within the church. It is important for congregations to look to Scripture, and on that basis, prayerfully consider the qualifications of those asked to serve as elders in the church. Rev. Victor A. Constien does just that when he writes of desirable qualities in elders for the congregation:

“As children of God through faith in Jesus, their Savior, elders

- a. show a willingness to learn and grow in God's grace and the skills of serving Him and others;
- b. demonstrate a faith which has been tested and refined through years of Christian experience;
- c. faithfully participate in services of worship, the Lord's Supper, and small group adult Bible studies on Sunday and throughout the week;
- d. pray regularly for the congregation, for its pastor and members, for their community, for all people, and for themselves;
- e. lovingly work with their wives, if married, to strengthen their marriage and manage their households to fulfill God's purposes;
- f. live personal lives which are above reproach;
- g. exhibit mental and emotional stability;
- h. demonstrate the ability to cultivate good interpersonal relationships, help people work toward solving personal problems, and live in love with those with whom they frequently clash;

- i. show a deep commitment to the success of the congregation and the pastor as measured by God's goals for them;
- j. exhibit a willingness to risk for the sake of Christ and His Gospel and to forgive when frail Christians are unable to carry out all their plans perfectly."⁵

3. *List things elders should be doing at every Divine Service to assist the pastor.*

- Oversee all services, making sure that they are held regularly, on time, and conducted decently and in order.
- Provide an usher team at all services.
- Maintain a welcoming atmosphere in the church before, during, and after all services.
- Welcome all visitors and have them sign the guest or friendship register.
- Be faithful in attending the weekly Divine Services, as well as Advent, Lent, and Holy Week services.
- Assist in providing the pastor(s) with adequate pulpit and altar assistance.
- Keep accurate attendance records at all services.
- Look for visitors at services, speak to them, and introduce them to others, including the pastor(s).

4. *How can the board of elders show genuine care for the pastor?*

“Serve as special assistants to the pastor(s), supporting them with prayer, helping them with special problems in their ministry; and concerning themselves with the spiritual, emotional and physical health and welfare of the pastor(s) and their families. They shall ensure that they are provided with adequate compensation, housing and assistance with their work to guarantee them sufficient free time for personal responsibilities, study and relaxation.” (See Appendix E: Job Description)

- Support the pastor in supervising the doctrine and practice of the congregation based on the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.
- Take time to listen to the pastor's concerns in order to understand and assist him with problems or difficulties within the congregation.

⁵ Victor A. Constien, *The Caring Elder: A Training Manual for Serving* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 24–25.

- Watch over the doctrine and practice of the pastor in the spirit of love and care.

5. *Why is it caring to confront someone who is sinning, and how can a pastor or elder do it without appearing self-righteous?*

In general, people tend to minimize the seriousness of sin and its effect on their own lives and on the lives of others. Hence, there is no urgency about receiving the Gospel for the forgiveness of their sins in the Divine Service or privately before the pastor. There is also a reluctance to confront those who are sinning out of fear of being accused of being self-righteous. Yet, listen to what Jesus says about this. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” (Matthew 18:15–17a).

The truth is that we all fall short of following every commandment, whether in thought, word, or deed. The only one who has followed every commandment perfectly is Jesus Christ. Pastors and elders can confront others in their sin without appearing self-righteous by acknowledging their own sinfulness and need of Christ's righteousness. This righteousness of Jesus Christ is given to us through the Gospel. Elders care for the spiritual life of the members of the congregation by pointing them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

6. *What are characteristics of an effective letter, call, or visit made by an elder to a member of the congregation?*

When writing, calling, or visiting, it is important to establish a tone of genuine care. Many see an elder contact as meaning that they have done something wrong or that they're being singled out. However, there may be something someone in the congregation has done that has led this person to be estranged from worship. When visiting, listen to the other person without evaluating what he or she is saying. Let him know that you are hearing what he is saying. Ask follow-up questions to get at the heart of what is going on. You don't need to try to solve the presenting problem, if there is one. Be yourself, and be genuine in your care and concern for the person's spiritual welfare. The most important thing you can do in a visit is to establish a trust and understanding of the person with whom you are visiting. Before leaving, you should ask if it would be all right to share a devotion and prayer.

7. *How can the elders help assimilate new members into the congregation and assist in keeping families connected to the church?*

One of the easiest things an elder can do and what has great impact is simply to recognize what is going on in the lives of the people entrusted to his care. A short note that he is praying for the person or family and recognizing a birthday, anniversary, or a significant event in the person's life expresses care for that person. Often new members are not adequately assimilated into the life of the congregation. Elders need to be especially aware of how those who have been members for years may unknowingly discourage new members from getting involved and feeling at home in the congregation. In elder meetings, elders and pastors should talk about how to involve new members in activities and make an intentional effort to help them to feel at home. In addition, there are times when active members become less active, especially if there are changes in their lives.

8. *Why are written agendas and pastor reports important for elder meetings?*

Both pastor(s) and elders have a responsibility to meet regularly and to make board of elders meetings beneficial and effective so that the goal of caring for the church and one another is accomplished. This starts with the chairman preparing a written agenda for each meeting and following it. In addition to the chairman providing a written agenda for the meeting, it is important for the pastor to provide a written report to the board of elders. A written report is preferable to an oral report. A written report assists the pastor in reviewing and thinking through how he is using his time and it assists the elders in understanding the challenges of the pastoral task and demands on the pastor's time. The pastor report does not need to go into every detail of what the pastor does each day nor should it reveal confidential information. The report is also not offered for the purpose of justifying what the pastor is doing. It does, however, assist the pastor and elders in assessing how the pastor is using his time relative to what he has been called and ordained to do within the congregation. It is very easy to get sidetracked from Word and Sacrament ministry to spending all one's time on administrative and organizational tasks.

9. *How can pastors and elders make elder meetings more effective and involve everyone in the meeting?*

- Always start the meeting on time even if some are late in arriving.

- Set a time limit on the meeting.
- If, during the meeting, someone begins talking about things not pertinent to the issue being discussed, politely but firmly remind him of the agenda item under discussion. For example, you might say, “That’s a good point you are making, but right now we are discussing the first item on the agenda.”
- One of the elders may not like to say anything, but obviously has much to contribute or he wouldn’t be on the board. It may be that he is shy or intimidated by speaking in front of others. A good way to get him involved in the conversation is to affirm him and ask if he’d like to share his opinion on a given issue. Or you might go around the table and ask each elder what he thinks about a particular issue.
- There also may be an elder or pastor who likes to argue about everything. Perhaps he just likes to be a “devil’s advocate.” Let him have his say, but then ask the other elders’ opinion if it is pertinent to the subject at hand. Someone will usually respond in a way that gets the meeting back on track.

10. How should transfers and releases be handled in elder meetings?

It is important to talk about transfers or releases in an elder meeting. Sometimes, even pastors recommend transfers or releases without much thought about the spiritual welfare of those being transferred or released. It is not uncommon, especially in larger congregations, to simply receive a letter of transfer from another congregation concerning a family who are members of your congregation. This is often done with without any questions being asked. In some cases, there may be a spiritual issue involved and the person or family is simply running away from it. Congregations should not be enabling such sinful behavior. Before transferring or releasing a member, the matter needs to be resolved and reconciled through the forgiveness of Christ. Elders need to ask why a person or family is transferring. There are times when it should not be approved. In addition, when a transfer or release occurs for other reasons, it is important for elders and pastors not to demonize those leaving. It may be personally hurtful to you when someone leaves a congregation for reasons that seem petty or unloving, but there is often other things going on in the life of that person or family. Instead of being angry, leave the door open for them to return. Be gracious and understanding toward such people, especially since they may need your help later on.

View and discuss video vignettes for Chapter 2.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN PASTORS AND ELDERS

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

—Philippians 2:1–3

OPENING PRAYER

God, You are the Spirit who gives life. You gave help to Moses and to his assistants. You direct the pastors who share the Gospel with us. You showered Your church on Pentecost with a life-giving fountain. You still nourish this congregation today. Now we ask You to come upon us. Help us, direct us, use us. Increase faith, hope and love among the members of this congregation. Unite us with our pastor as the one who has the special responsibility for our spiritual well-being. We pray for the growth and life of those committed to our care. We pray especially for those who are sick or troubled or in any distress of body, soul, or spirit. Give us a sensitivity to the needs of others. For Jesus' sake. Amen.⁶

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- trust God through His Word to establish trust between pastors and elders;
- recognize differences in personalities as an asset instead of a liability;
- trust one another as members of the Body of Christ.

⁶ Adapted from Kenneth W. Rogahn, *Begin with Prayer: Openings for Church Group Meetings* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1985), 33–34.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. *Why is it important for pastors and elders to trust one another?*

We are members of the Body of Christ. As such, it is what we are given to do. If we lack trust in one another, we could end up destroying one another.

2. *What are some of the reasons for a breakdown in trust between pastors and elders?*

Sometimes difficulties in relationships between elders and pastors occur not due specifically to sin, but because of a clash of differing personality styles. Of course, everything we do is tainted by sin, but understanding the influence of our different personality styles can be helpful in developing trust between pastors and elders. It can assist us in understanding how others perceive things and how best to relate to them.

There are many research studies that have analyzed relational patterns and a variety of ways of categorizing personality styles. Generally speaking, we all possess four different personality styles. One of those styles tends to be more dominant in us than the others. It is a style in which we are most comfortable and which requires the least energy and stress.

There are no best or worst styles; all personality styles have advantages and disadvantages. All styles are effective when appropriate to the situation and implemented well. Also, a particular behavioral style only defines patterns of behavior. It does not address how an individual thinks or feels. Understanding these personality styles within all of us is helpful because it makes us aware of the fact that other people have different needs. Everyone communicates, uses times, relates, makes decisions, and manages conflict differently.

3. *What are the characteristics of the four main personality types?*

The four main personality styles may be categorized in a variety of ways. I have chosen to categorize them as Doer, Perfectionist, Connector, and Charmer. The doer is highly efficient in getting things done but is not concerned about relationships. The perfectionist is concerned about getting things right but may not be concerned about doing it in a timely manner. A Connector is concerned about everyone working together as a team but may be reluctant to confront others when things go wrong. A Charmer draws people to him or herself and is fun to be around but may not get around to accomplishing tasks in a timely manner.

4. *What is Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and how can it be helpful in maintaining trust between elders and pastors?*

Emotional intelligence is one's personal competence in the areas of self-awareness and self-management, and social competence in the areas of social awareness and relationship management. The simple fact is that our emotions change when we are upset, and we can either be controlled by them or learn to control them. The good news concerning emotional intelligence is you can become more emotionally aware in your relationships with others, do better at controlling your emotions, and as a result, enhance your trust of one another.

5. *Take a personal style inventory. What is your dominant personality style?*

Answers will vary.

NOTE: A downloadable personal style inventory is available from Washington University College of Engineering LEAD:

www.engr.washington.edu/lead/PostedMaterials/Social%20Styles/Tab4colorPulsarPink-SocialStyles.pdf

Other online personal style and personality inventories are also available. Here are a few:

http://goer.state.ny.us/training_development/online_learning/PSA

www.d.umn.edu/careers/inventories/personality_test_intro.html

www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp

www.saleshelp.com/assessments/PersonalityStylesInventory/PerStyleInv.html

6. *Fill out a peer personal style inventory on a fellow elder or the pastor. What is his dominant personality style from your perspective?*

Answers will vary.

7. *Compare your personal style inventory with the one filled out about you by one of your peers on the board of elders, and with everyone on the board of elders, including the pastor(s).*

Answers will vary.

NOTE: Be sure that peer inventories are shared with the subject of the peer style inventory. Such exercises are used to assist and care for one another.

8. *Review personality style descriptions.*
9. *Discuss the five most pressing needs of pastors (see Appendix F).*

View and discuss video vignettes for Chapter 3.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH IN A SELF-ABSORBED CULTURE

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

—Romans 12:2

OPENING PRAYER

We are grateful, Lord Jesus Christ, that You have established Your Church on earth, where You bless us with love and mercy in the Word and Sacraments. We are grateful Your Word is proclaimed in our congregation in truth and purity. May the Holy Spirit fill the members of our congregation, that it may be said of us, “they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer.” Help us to do our part to keep it so for our own spiritual good. Use our congregation for the building of Your kingdom on earth. Make our congregation a power for good in the community, and bless our efforts to bring Your saving Gospel to the unchurched, to the glory of Your name. Hear my prayer, O Jesus. Amen.⁷

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God’s Word, we will

- identify troubling issues related to a self-absorbed culture;
- apply God’s Word, specifically the tools of Law and Gospel, to address those issues so that we become better at reaching out to people in a self-absorbed culture.

⁷ Adapted from *My Prayer Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1957), 112–13.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. *List examples of how Christians are becoming more and more conformed to the world.*

Many who call themselves Christians do not attend Divine Services in the church, live together before marriage, and generally see no connection between the Word of God and how they live their lives.

2. *How many members of your congregation have a “hatch (baptize), match (marry), and dispatch (bury)” understanding of the pastoral ministry? Few? Many? Most?*

Answers will vary.

What can be done to change this view of the church and its ministry?

In order to change this mentality, pastors and elders need to be vigilant in teaching God's Word and applying it to people's lives. They need to trust the power of God's Word, both Law and Gospel, as a means of changing people's lives.

3. *Are there members of your congregation who recognize the need for their child(ren) to be baptized but fail to see the need to feed the faith created in Holy Baptism on a weekly basis? What are some things pastors and elders can do to change that?*

Answers will vary. Apply the Word of God by showing that without a regular diet of God's Word, faith can be starved to death.

4. *How can elders assist the pastor(s) in teaching members of the congregation the importance of hearing the Word of God and partaking of the Sacrament on a weekly basis?*

By themselves being faithful in worship and Bible class and in regular reception of the Sacrament. We teach best by doing. In addition, elders need to be personally inviting people to join them at Divine Service.

5. *How can elders assist the pastor in handling the issue of couples living together before marriage? What are the issues involved and the goal of care for those in this situation?*

Elders can support the pastor by affirming the Word of God on this matter and having a marriage policy adopted by the board of elders. The goal for all couples is repentance and faith that they would receive the blessing of God on their life together as husbands and wives.

NOTE: An easy-to-use resource to see and understand the Scripture's teaching on marriage, sex outside of marriage, and couples living together apart from marriage, can be found in the booklet *Second Thoughts about Living Together* by Rev. Matthew C. Harrison (CPH 2005, #10-1773).

6. *What is the state of marriage and family in your congregation? How many of the families within your congregation have been affected by divorce?*

Answers will vary.

7. *How have sports affected attendance at weekly Divine Services and Bible classes in your congregation? What are some things that pastors and elders can do to address this?*

Discuss this issue with parents and work together with parents and coaches to address the importance of regular reception of God's word in the lives of His people.

8. *What is the source of President Meyer's optimism concerning the future of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?*

"I am very positive about the future of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. . . . if we humble ourselves and seek the whole counsel of God. . . . In the pastor's study, in the homes of all the baptized, in small group Bible studies, and in our life's centerpiece, the divine service, studying, hearing, and obeying the whole counsel of God should be our occupation."

9. *What is Christian meditation and how is it done?*

“Christian meditation differs from all other kinds of meditation because it concentrates on what Jesus says; it is meditation on His Word as it is given to us in the Scriptures [cf Dt. 6:6]. We meditate on His powerful Word. His Word has an impact on us as pay attention to it, does its work in us as we listen to it, and reshapes us inwardly as we let it have its say. The words of Jesus actually produce our meditation. Yet that does not happen automatically but only as we put our trust in it.”⁸

NOTE: The topic of Christian meditation is taken up well by Dr. John Kleinig in *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today* (CPH © 2008, #12-4289); see “The Mystery of Meditation,” pp. 87–150.

10. *Where is the answer to the challenge of a self-absorbed culture to be found?*

Jesus [said,] “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words” (John 14:23–24a). In real estate, the saying goes “it’s all about location, location, location.” In the church, it is all about God’s Word, Word, Word! The answer to the challenge is more and more of God’s Word!

View and discuss video vignette for Chapter 4.

⁸ John W. Kleinig, *Grace upon Grace* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 100.

CHAPTER FIVE

WORKING WITHIN ONE'S VOCATION

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not have all the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

—Romans 12:3–5

OPENING PRAYER

Dearest Jesus, our Redeemer and the Shepherd of our souls, we thank You that through Holy Baptism You have made us members of Your body, the Church. We entreat You to bless most richly the congregation of saints of which You have called us to be a part. May Your Word always be purely preached and taught among us, and may we gladly hear and learn it and grow in knowledge of and love for You. May Your Sacraments be given according to Your command, and may we always value most highly the forgiveness of sins and eternal life You give us through them. Work in us love and respect for our pastor. Help us to uphold him and his family in prayer and obey him as Your undershepherd, so that with joy he may fulfill the task You have given him of guarding our souls. Prepare us through his ministry to use the gifts you have given each of us in service to others that Your body might be built up. Keep far from us pride and dissention. Help us, without jealousy, to value the diverse gifts you have given our brothers and sisters. Teach us to weep with and support those who suffer and to rejoice with those who rejoice. Call, gather, and enlighten many others to travel with us on the journey to heaven, where You together with the Father and the Holy Spirit are worshiped by saints and angels, now and forever. Amen. (97)⁹

OBJECTIVES

⁹ Adapted from *Lutheran Book of Prayer* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 149–50.

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- understand the doctrine of vocation;
- apply the doctrine of vocation to the work of pastors and elders in the church.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. *Why is it important to remember that Jesus is the head of the Church, and what does that mean?*

Jesus, as the head of the Church, directs our work within our given vocations so that we act in accord with His Word. By the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God and by the Lord's very body and blood streaming through our veins as the body of Christ, we are enlivened, nurtured, and strengthened for service in our given vocations.

NOTE: A nice discussion of vocation can be found in Dr. Gene Veith's book *Spirituality of the Cross* (CPH © 1999, #12-4290); see "Vocation: The Spirituality of Ordinary Life," pp. 89–116.

2. *What is a vocation?*

A vocation is a calling, something a person is given to do. The vocations we are given in life are really gifts of God. For example, I did not choose the calling of being a son. Having been blessed by God with a wife and children, I also have a calling to be a husband and father. These callings are labors of love. God called me through the church to be a pastor. Elders are also called to work in the Church.

3. *What does it mean to work within one's vocation? Why is working within one's vocation important?*

Pastors and elders bring different gifts in service to the Lord and His Church. Instead of attempting to get everyone to do the same thing, it is far better to use the talents and abilities of people in a way that is in accord with their talents and that fits with who they are. For example, there are some elders who will tend to be good at speaking in front of people at voters' meetings, while others find following up with members behind the scenes a better fit. Both public speaking and individual follow-up with members of the congregation are important tasks for elders. Likewise, different pastors will have strengths and weaknesses relative to the different aspects of their vocation as pastors. Matching the task with someone who has a talent for that task will be far more beneficial to the congregation than assigning a task to someone who is ill-equipped to carry it out.

4. *At an elder meeting, ask each elder and the pastor to describe what he has been called by God to do in life. What are those things?*

Answers will vary.

5. *At the same meeting, ask each elder and the pastor to identify three strengths and three growth areas of what he has been called to do as an elder or pastor. What are those strength and growth areas?*

Answers will vary.

6. *Based on strengths and growth areas identified above, would some elders be better suited for a different vocation within the board of elders?*

Answers will vary.

7. *What are the benefits of identifying the various vocations that people have in the congregation?*

Answers will vary.

8. *Is the pastor involved in some vocations within the church that are taking him away from his vocation of Word and Sacrament ministry? If he is, who would be more suited to take on those tasks?*

Answers will vary.

View and discuss video vignette for Chapter 5.

CHAPTER SIX

ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD THROUGH ONE ANOTHER

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

—Hebrews 4:11–13

OPENING PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. O dear Lord, God and Father, do not enter into judgment against us, for in Your sight no one who lives is justified before You. Do not count it against us as sin that we are so unthankful for all Your indescribable spiritual and physical blessings. Do not judge us on account of our daily sin. We stumble and sin many more times than we even know or recognize. “For He who avenges blood is mindful of them; He does not forget the cry of the afflicted” (Psalm 9:12).

Look away from our accomplishments as well as our wickedness; in Your boundless compassion look instead upon Your dear Son, Jesus Christ. Forgive also those who are our enemies or who have wronged us, just as we forgive them from our hearts. By their actions against us, they arouse Your anger and hurt themselves, yet we are not helped by their ruin and would much rather that they be saved with us. Amen. (54)¹⁰

OBJECTIVES

By the Holy Spirit at work through God's Word, we will

- understand the importance of being accountable to God through one another;
- hold one another accountable to God by means of His Word.

¹⁰ *Lutheran Book of Prayer* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005), 64.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. *In what ways are pastors and elders accountable to one another? Why?*

Both pastor and congregation are held accountable to God through one another by means of God's Word. To be held accountable is to recognize the reality of sin and its consequences. Genuine repentance is to be met not by "that's okay," but by the words, "I forgive you." The blessing of forgiveness is that instead of the sin remaining within us, it is removed. The goal of holding people accountable for what they have done wrong is the forgiveness of sins, and forgiveness is far better than futile attempts to minimize wrongdoing, or to pretend that it didn't happen.

2. *Why is it so difficult to practice discipline within the Church?*

It seems unloving. In addition, many believe that proclaiming the judgment of God on sin will adversely affect numerical growth in the Church, so instead of condemning sin, many pastors and elders overlook it out of fear that those sinning will leave the Church.

3. *How does a failure to practice discipline within the Church lead to a general disrespect of authority within the Church?*

The failure of pastors and elders to use the authority given by God through the Church to discipline those entrusted to their care has led to a general disrespect of that authority. Like the little boy that kept hitting his sister, there are those who don't think that God really means what He says in His Word. As a result, they don't believe that there are dire and eternal consequences to sin.

4. *Why is it so difficult to confront someone when he or she is sinning?*

It is considered unloving and even intolerant to say that there are those who are wrong and that they need to repent. It is considered even worse if there are attempts to implement consequences for those who have done wrong.

5. *Look at the apostle Peter's entire sermon in Acts chapter two. Does he mince words when it comes to condemning sin?*

No, he says it like it is.

6. *What is the problem with overlooking unrepentant sin in the congregation?*

The impenitent are damned.

7. *How can pastors and elders do a better job of supporting one another when having to confront those who are unrepentant sinners?*

By trusting the efficacy of God's Word.

View and discuss video vignette for Chapter 6.