

CIRCUIT OVERSEER MEETS WITH ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS PROGRAM FOR SEPTEMBER 2016 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2017

Note to the circuit overseer:

Jesus treated the sheep with genuine warmth and tenderness. Appointed men should prayerfully consider how they can imitate Jesus' refreshing manner to a greater degree. They should strive to cultivate a Christ-like personal interest in the sheep. This will impel them to be encouraging in word and deed. Please emphasize these key points in your consideration of the outline. Your own example in being refreshing and encouraging to the elders and ministerial servants will reinforce your teaching and help you to reach their hearts

Theme: Be Refreshing and Encouraging! (Mt 11:28-30)

JESUS SET THE EXAMPLE (4 min.)

Jesus refreshed others by the way he treated them [**Read Matthew 11:28-30**]

He worked side by side with his disciples, encouraged them, and displayed mildness

Elders have the privilege and responsibility to imitate Jesus (Isa 32:1, 2)

The actions of elders and ministerial servants profoundly affect the spirit of the congregation

As a beautiful flower droops when neglected or subjected to harsh conditions, so individuals wilt from lack of encouragement

Conversely, a flower that is well cared for thrives (Isa 35:3)

Giving encouragement is not limited to telling someone he is doing well. It involves providing practical assistance, spiritual help, and training

The Greek word translated "encouragement" literally means "a calling to one's side"

Walking side by side with our brothers enables us to give immediate support (Ec 4:9, 10)

We will now discuss ways that we can refresh and encourage ones in the ministry, on the servant body, and in our family

ENCOURAGE OTHERS IN THE MINISTRY (15 min.)

Regularly work with the publishers in the field ministry

Our principal way of spreading the good news is from house to house (*w08* 7/15 3-4 ¶2-4; *od* 81-82 ¶3-5)

Although it is important to make return visits, conduct Bible studies, and engage in public witnessing, elders and ministerial servants need to take a visible lead in group witnessing and in the *house-to-house work*, providing training and encouragement to others (*od* 40 ¶31; 96-97 ¶45-46; *jr* 133 ¶10)

While working in the ministry, endeavor to spend meaningful time with a variety of publishers

Preaching "without letup" gives additional opportunities for individuals to hear the Kingdom message. Changed circumstances may cause them to respond differently than in the past (*Ac* 5:42; *w08* 1/15 15 ¶11)

Many personal benefits are derived

We learn greater reliance on Jehovah (*Ac* 4:29; *2Co* 4:7)

Bonds of love and unity are strengthened (*Php* 2:22; *w06* 5/1 18-19 ¶6)

We develop greater humility (*1Co* 9:19-23)

Our faith and hope are made more firm (*1Pe* 3:15; *w96* 5/1 22)

Publishers are encouraged when we accompany them on Bible studies and take a personal interest in their students (*km* 3/03 5 ¶18-19)

Determine what may be hindering students from progressing towards dedication and baptism, and offer helpful suggestions (*km* 12/14 2-3; *od* 87-88 ¶20-21)

Getting to know them will also help you to evaluate whether they truly qualify as unbaptized publishers and later, for baptism

Liberal commendation for the publishers' efforts is encouraging

Unfavorable comparisons using statistics can be discouraging (*Ga* 6:4)

Our ministry is a success if it is carried out faithfully and with zeal (*w01* 2/15 22 ¶17)

BE A SOURCE OF REFRESHMENT TO THE SERVANT BODY (15 min.)

Our fellow elders and ministerial servants should feel that we are walking side by side with them in caring for the congregation

Elders should prepare well for elders' meetings, follow through diligently on assignments, and fully support the decisions of the body (*ks10* 2:7, 9)

Questions: Why is it refreshing when elders and ministerial servants follow through promptly on assignments? How is the congregation benefited? Why is it important to notice and commend the work of fellow servants?

It is refreshing to serve with a body of elders that is peaceful and united

Accepting Jesus as head of the congregation promotes the proper spirit

When difficulties arise, a spiritual man displays Christlike mildness and other aspects of the fruitage of the spirit (*Ga* 5:22, 23)

A spiritual man pursues peace even if he feels wronged (*2Sa* 19:29, 30; *Ro* 12:18; 14:19)

He is not quarrelsome (*1Ti* 3:3)

Modesty and humility impel him to take the lead in showing honor (*Ro* 12:10)

Experienced overseers know that preserving peace is more important than getting one's way (*w01* 9/1 12-13 ¶18)

[Read James 3:13-18]

Questions: Which qualities highlighted in this passage do appointed men want to cultivate, and which ones should they shun? If appointed men are mild, reasonable, and at peace with each other, how will they likely treat the congregation? How is the congregation benefited by peaceful and united shepherds? [Righteousness will flourish. The sheep will feel secure. Precious time that could be spent shepherding will not be taken up by debates over incidental matters (*w99* 6/1 12-13 ¶16)]

ENCOURAGE YOUR FAMILY (8 min.)

Encouraging one's family is part of presiding in a fine manner (*1Ti* 3:4, 12)

Share side by side with your family in theocratic activities

In imitation of the Christ, fathers and husbands who love, cherish, and spiritually feed their families are encouraging and refreshing (*Eph* 5:28, 29; 6:4)

Warmly commend their support, which allows you to care for congregational responsibilities

Encouragement is not limited to telling someone he is doing well

It may involve giving kind exhortation or counsel

Some have held back from giving their wife or children needed counsel on their share in the ministry, attendance and participation at the meetings, or dress and grooming

Jesus did not let sentimentality hold him back from giving counsel to Martha and Peter (*w07* 2/15 16-17 ¶16-18)

Such counsel should be given in a kind, loving manner, using well-chosen words based firmly on Scriptural principles

Greater spirituality will result in the refreshing blessing of Jehovah on your family

Questions: What effect is there on the publishers when the families of appointed men set a poor example? Why is the congregation encouraged when the families of appointed men are exemplary?

EFFECTIVELY AND THOROUGHLY COVER YOUR TERRITORY (15 min.)

[Early in the week, please confirm that (1) the elders have in the congregation's permanent file a *Congregation Territory Assignment* (S-54) letter from the branch office, (2) the congregation is making good progress in thoroughly and systematically covering its territory, and (3) accurate records of territory coverage are being kept. (*od* 90-92 ¶30-34) Provide the brothers with your observations and, as needed, give practical suggestions to help the congregation more thoroughly search out deserving ones. (Mt 10:11) For example, as outlined in the *Congregation Territory Assignment* letter, local circumstances should be taken into consideration when determining the size of individual territories. Many congregations have found that individual territories of 200 to 300 homes serve their needs well. However, congregations having very limited territory might reduce the size of individual territories to only 50 to 75 homes. Publishers may be more motivated to request a personal territory close to where they live or work if the territory has fewer homes. Publishers may also need further training in how to keep accurate records and give a more thorough witness when working from house to house. (*km* 4/07 8) If it is not possible to make arrangements to assist the congregation to cover its territory and if sections of it have not been worked for at least two years, recommend to the branch office which sections should be assigned to nearby congregations or listed as unassigned territory. If the *Congregation Territory Assignment* letter cannot be located, the elders should request a copy from the Service Department]

CONCLUSION (3 min.)

As the last days become ever more difficult to deal with, it is vital that God's precious sheep receive encouragement (Heb 10:24, 25)

[Briefly review the three areas covered in this outline]

Pray fervently to Jehovah to make you imitate Jesus' example more fully (Ps 25:4, 5)

By imitating Jesus' way of dealing with others, we will be sure to be refreshing

Jehovah will richly bless your efforts to help the congregation stand "firm in one spirit, with one soul, striving side by side for the faith of the good news" (Php 1:27)

[At this point, the ministerial servants should be dismissed. Thereafter, please review with the elders the following information and any other matters needing attention. Be alert to provide the elders with practical direction that addresses one or two of the most significant local needs. (Php 1:9, 10; *tg* 4:4, 15) For example, if shepherding needs greater attention, kindly direct the elders to review the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 4, and the letter dated February 2, 2014, to all bodies of elders. (*tg* 19:5) With regard to the appointment and deletion of elders and ministerial servants, please follow closely the instructions provided in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*, chapter 17. At the start of your discussion with the body of elders regarding such appointments or deletions, the Scriptural requirements should be read aloud from the Bible (*tg* 17:5)]

[As directed in *Circuit Overseer Guidelines*, appendix C, be sure to review the average balance of funds held by the congregation, whether locally or with the branch office as funds on deposit, by reviewing recent *Monthly Congregation Accounts Reports* (S-30). Is the balance in harmony with what the branch office recommends to care for congregation and Kingdom Hall operating expenses? If the balance appears to be larger than what is needed, encourage the elders to consider contributing the excess funds to the organization]

[Please remind the elders that any literature carts or tables used in public witnessing should be well-maintained and that the literature should be displayed in a neat and dignified manner. See *Public Witnessing Supplies* (S-80) for good examples of how to display literature. The service overseer should monitor this matter]