

CIRCUIT OVERSEER MEETS WITH ELDERS AND MINISTERIAL SERVANTS

PROGRAM FROM SEPTEMBER 1998 THROUGH FEBRUARY 1999

Theme: Serving With a Self-Sacrificing Spirit (Ro 12:1)

Note to circuit overseer: Ministerial servants will be present for the first 45 minutes of this meeting. An additional 30 minutes will be spent with the elders only, covering pages 118-21 from the 1991 Kingdom Ministry School textbook. In advance, encourage elders to review this material and to bring their Kingdom Ministry School textbooks with them. The entire meeting, including the discussion of other matters on the agenda with the elders, should not exceed two hours

TRODUCTION (5 min.)

To sacrifice means to give up or surrender something valuable

From early times, sacrifices have been a part of pure worship (Ge 4:3, 4)

Self-sacrificing spirit of willing service has always been evident among Jehovah's loyal servants, like the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Paul, "Bible" Brown, John Cutforth, and so on (Isa 6:8; Ac 16:9, 10; *jv* 433, 527-8)

Christ's love compels us to sacrifice self-interests for Jehovah (Mt 16:24; Ro 12:1; 2Co 5:14, 15)

What are some areas wherein elders and ministerial servants can display a self-sacrificing spirit?

SET EXAMPLE AS A SELF-SACRIFICING EVANGELIZER (10 min.)

Giving up time that might be used for personal pursuits to share in the ministry is self-sacrifice

Jesus set the pattern, taking time to help others late into the evening and early in the morning (Mr 1:32-39)

How much do we exert ourselves in the evangelizing work?

Could you arrange to auxiliary pioneer at least once a year? (Eph 5:15, 16)

Requires discipline and good scheduling (1Ti 4:10)

By word and example, are you teaching your family to make sacrifices for Jehovah?

Can family work together to help wife or children to pioneer instead of working full-time?

One goal of each Christian should be to conduct at least one home Bible study with someone outside of his own household (*km* 8/90 1)

A number do not conduct Bible studies because of the commitment of time and effort involved

Could we make the adjustment and sacrifice an hour or two a week for this rewarding activity?

By comparison, how much time is used for pleasures or entertainment?

What is your spirit toward the Bible study activity?

Do you hold back or put forth real effort to cultivate interest?

Do you regularly pray for a Bible study?

Such sacrifices to help others please Jehovah

To a great degree, the congregation relies on your positive example

Help others to enjoy what they are able to do; commend and encourage them (1Th 1:2, 3)

Your good example will allow freeness of speech

Joys outweigh any inconveniences suffered

DO NOT NEGLECT SACRIFICES OF PRAISE AT CHRISTIAN MEETINGS (10 min.)

Primary purpose of meetings is to praise Jehovah (Ps 26:12; w98 3/1 14)

Public expressions of praise at Christian meetings are a part of our sacrifice (Heb 13:15)

Requires sacrificing personal interests to prepare well and attend regularly

In many lands, brothers put forth extraordinary effort to attend and to help others to do so (yb97 235-6)

Faith in Jehovah is involved in our willingness to sacrifice

How could lack of faith in the living God affect meeting attendance?

Weighing ourselves down with unnecessary things—excessive recreation, entertainment, extra secular work to obtain personal comforts—could interfere (Heb 12:1)

Many must work hard just to get the necessities of life—food, clothing, and shelter

Some allow secular work to take priority over attendance at meetings

Jesus' counsel to 'seek first the Kingdom' meant not allowing anxiety over providing the necessities of life to interfere with spiritual interests (Mt 6:31-34)

If we exercise faith in him, Jehovah will help us care for family responsibilities without our neglecting worship of him at congregation meetings (1Ti 5:8)

Does your conduct demonstrate faith worthy of imitation? (Heb 13:7)

Hebrews 10:24, 25 says to gather together, "all the *more* so," especially in these critical times hard to deal with (2Ti 3:1)

LF-SACRIFICING LOVE CONTRIBUTES TO UNITY (10 min.)

Some congregations have had their peace disrupted by disunity among bodies of elders and lack of cooperation on part of ministerial servants (Isa 54:13)

It also interferes with preaching of good news and caring for congregation; impedes flow of God's spirit

Satan directly opposes unity under Christ; aim is to cause division (Eph 1:22; 4:26, 27)

We "allow place for the Devil" if we permit him to play upon our imperfections and fleshly weaknesses, such as keeping account of injuries, pride, feelings of self-importance, resentment at not getting prominence we feel we deserve

When elders and ministerial servants work unitedly within congregational structure, demonstrating self-sacrificing love for one another, great strength results (Ec 4:12)

Christian modesty, meekness, and humility will prevent one from trying to dominate his brothers and impose his opinion (Pr 11:2; Col 3:12; w88 10/1 17, par. 9)

One possessing wisdom from above not only avoids being contentious and belligerent but goes out of his way to establish good relations with others

Recent Kingdom Ministry School emphasized need to be receptive to counsel (Heb 12:5, 6)

Rather than wait for someone to offer suggestions, take initiative, and ask for counsel where you perceive you need help

Do not let resentment or pride keep you from listening to observations and counsel from others

A yielding spirit will help us avoid any tendency to retaliate or resort to recrimination

By submitting to headship of Christ and treating one another with love and respect, elders and ministerial servants will protect peace and unity of congregation (Read Philippians 1:1, 27)

LOCAL NEEDS (8 min.)**CONCLUSION (2 min.)**

Warmly commend elders and ministerial servants for sacrifices made to serve Jehovah and brothers

In new world, we will be able to look back with satisfaction, knowing that during this urgent time, we did our part, willingly setting aside personal interests for Jehovah's interests (Ps 54:6)

[At this point the ministerial servants should be dismissed. The following material will be considered with the elders only]

HANDLING CASES OF WRONGDOING WITH WISDOM AND MERCY (*ks91* 118-21) (30 min.)

[Cover Unit 5(c), "Handling Cases of Wrongdoing With Wisdom and Mercy," page 118, down to but not including the section on page 121 entitled "If the Decision Is to Disfellowship." Encourage elders to follow along in their textbook. Allow time to look up and apply key scriptures. As you cover this material, include the following questions]

INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS (2 min.)

1. What important lessons are to be learned from the way Jehovah handled the rebellion in Eden? (Elders should imitate Jehovah, taking prompt action according to Bible principles and laws)
2. Before the hearing itself, what should each member of the committee do? (*ks91* 118, par. 2)

BEFORE FORMING A JUDICIAL COMMITTEE (4 min.)

1. How can the person who is a witness to a serious sin aid both the wrongdoer and the congregation? (The witness should make sure the responsible elders become aware of it. Usually best to approach the person involved first, though it is not wrong to go directly to elders. He should encourage the wrongdoer to approach the elders, then after a reasonable period of time check with the elders to be sure they know) (*w97* 8/15 27, par. 7)
2. When is it not advisable for the witness to confront the accused alone? What should the elders do? (When he is a party to the wrongdoing, is a victim, or is extremely timid. Children who are victims of molestation should not be required to confront the accused. In some cases two elders or an elder and the witness can confront the accused)

JUDICIAL COMMITTEE HEARING PROCEDURE (24 min.)

1. After opening with prayer, what should the chairman do? How? (State reason for meeting, clearly indicating they are a judicial committee. Best to open with Scriptural point, setting tone. Endeavor to put accused at ease, assuring him of elders' desire to be helpful)
2. Explain what is to be done if the accused person does not admit guilt. (The alleged wrongdoer has right to face his accusers. In most cases, he will have opportunity to hear their testimony and reply. After presenting accusation and its source, the committee will give the accused opportunity to respond. However, if, perhaps due to distance, it is impractical for the witnesses to be present, this should not prevent committee from proceeding)
3. Why is it important for the committee to be skillful in asking questions and in using God's Word? (Skillful use of Bible may reach wrongdoer's heart and move him to repentance. Skillful questions are important to establish facts and discern wrongdoer's attitude. Generally best to avoid such questions as, 'Have you prayed to Jehovah for forgiveness?' Instead, perhaps a more skillful question is, 'What have you done to repair your relationship with Jehovah?' The Kingdom Ministry School textbook, page 112, paragraph 2, says: "Probing questions should not go into needless details, especially in regard to sexual misconduct, unless this is *absolutely* necessary, such as in determining whether *por-nei'a* had been committed")
4. How can members of the committee avoid giving the impression of being biased? (They should be quick to listen. Wait until all facts have been heard before making decision)
5. Discuss the various factors to be considered by the committee in their deliberations after all the evidence has been presented. (Additional reference material: *ks91* 112, par. 7; 113, par. 3; 114, par. 10; 115, par. 3; *w81* 9/1 25-6, pars. 21-3; *w95* 1/1 30, par. 3; *it-2* 771, par. 5, first sentence)
6. What is to be done if disfellowshipping is necessary? (Inform the wrongdoer of decision *orally*; do not inform him in writing)

[After covering the above material, consider other necessary matters needing the attention of the body of elders for 45 minutes]