QLD PRESBYTERIAN
ELDER TRAINING

THE ELDERSHIP PAPERS

FOR THE TRAINING OF ELDERS IN THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF QUEENSLAND

Eldership Paper 3

Extracted from

The Eldership Papers 2023-24

Eldership Paper Three

The Elder and the Minister/Pastor

Introduction

Up to this point we have been describing the characteristics and motivations of an Elder. In Eldership Paper 3, will describe the relationship between the Elder/s and the Minister or Pastor, which is both simple and complex. In this section, we will cover a range of smaller topics which I hope will yield good conversations between the Elder/s and the Minister.

Three resources for this and the ongoing chapters are:

- *Rare Leadership* – Marcus Warner/Jim Wilder
- *Imperfect Leadership (Chapter 15: Leadership)* - Zack Eswine
- *The Plurality Principle: How to Build and Maintain a Thriving Leadership* - David Harvey

Describing the Relationship

I believe, if able, we should use biblical language to describe relationships between Christians. My primary biblical suggestions to use to describe the relationship between the Elder/s and Minister are: brother, fellow-worker, fellow-servant, fellow-soldier.

What is the difference between:

Brother

Fellow

   -worker

   -servant

   -soldier?

The use of 'fellow' states that they are involved in the same pursuit, ministry and goal.

The relationship between Minister and the Elder/s should be mutual, loving and seeking through godly ministry and modelling, to encourage and lead God's household.

Elders – the Minister's First Team

The role of the Minister is to value his Elders as his first team. For most Ministers who serve churches without a staff, this is not particularly controversial, but still may be difficult to cultivate. For Ministers of larger congregations, with staff members, there is a temptation to make the staff your first team. This is understandable, given a Minister is likely to spend more time with the members of staff than the Elders day-to-day, but this temptation should be resisted by both the Minister and the Elders. Ministers resist this tendency by developing a personal relationship with the Elders that is deeper than that with the staff. There is always a significant power differential between staff and the Minister, whereas the Minister and Elder/s should cultivate complete mutuality. Elders resist the professionalisation of church ministry by pursing a team ministry of mutual encouragement and prayerful pastoral concern for the congregation.

The Elders and Minister serving together with prayerful engagement during the challenges, struggles, and ups and downs of brothers and sisters in the church, remains paramount.

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Question

How much of a Session's time should be devoted to prayer for the household of God?

Presbyterian Descriptions

The difference in roles between Ministers and Elders in our denomination is most commonly described as:

- Ministers are teaching Elders; and
- Elders are ruling Elders.

This distinction most likely comes from:

" *[17] The Elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." - 1 Timothy 5:17*

These descriptors appear neat but perhaps they are too neat; surely God rules through his word and all overseers are to be 'able to teach'.

I take it these overseers are ruling Elders.

Of course, all Ministers in our denomination have been trained to teach, while the majority of Elders have not done theological training. Yet, too wide a distinction between both roles is, I believe, unhelpful and deforming for the leadership of the church. Ministers must not be seen as professionals when it comes to teaching the Bible, and they certainly aren't when it comes to caring for the church. We 'profess' but we are not professionals. We are and should remain 'amateurs' - amateurs pursue something for the love of the activity. Teaching Elders and ruling Elders who are able to teach, do so for the love of God, God's people and one another.

Responsible to Whom?

Ministers in the denomination are ultimately accountable to the Presbytery. This has traditionally been limited to a visitation by a committee appointed by the Presbytery to assess the overall health of the church or charge every five years. The other time a Presbytery steps in and exercises its oversight is when it becomes clear that there is something possibly amiss in the church. This could range from insufficient funds to moral failure. It then it will appoint a special visitation to look into the health and/or viability of the congregation. Some Presbyteries are presently considering other patterns of mutual encouragement, support and health-checks.

When it comes to the day-to-day ministry in a congregation, a Minister as a brother, fellow-worker, -servant, and -soldier should covet the engagement of other Elders in his work. In a previous church at which I served, at our beginning of year Session retreat, I would present a draft report of where I believed I, as the Minister, needed to focus that year. When this was adopted, or reshaped and adopted, during the Session retreat, I would expect the Session of Elders to regularly ask me during the year, for an update on how the agreed upon tasks were going. Being accountable to the Presbytery ultimately does not cancel out the need for the Minister to be encouraged, supported and helpfully questioned about their ministry to and for God's people. Of course, there is a corollary to this: namely, that Elders also have a role and need to be encouraged, supported and helpfully questioned. This is mutual encouragement, and when done well, it forms a strong, cohesive, Christ honouring team.

Identity Group versus an Accountability Group

In *Rare Leadership* by Marcus Warner and Jim Wilder (p53), there is a discussion about the differences between an Identity Group and an Accountability Group. Essentially, Accountability Groups tend to fizzle out in time, with fear of failure undermining their effectiveness. Identity Groups are built around who we are and who we are called to be in Christ. They are made up of people who are each other's allies.

The group is:

- Prayerful
- Committed to being who God has called us to be in Christ (our best self)
- Tender towards weakness
- Committed to seeking God together and
- Aware that transformation takes time

One of the best ways I know of how this might happen is giving each Elder or would-be Elder the opportunity to share their story through a 'life mapping' exercise. This exercise is built around describing how God has been working in your story. This is much more than a testimony; it is a deep dive into knowing and trusting one another as brothers in Christ. We receive the precious gift of another's life story and make prayerful observations and encouragements[9].

Ongoing Maturity of a Church's Eldership

Another resources I have found useful in building maturity is the *Key Leadership Evaluation for Emotional Intelligence* by Ian Jagelman[10].

All Elders including the Minister/s should be committed to growing in what is known as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to become more aware of ourselves and the influences that work within us. It also enables us to become more aware of what is going on in and for other people. As a consequence, we grow in spiritual and relational maturity and are better able to serve God's people by engaging well in the life of the church.

The best way of doing this would be for an Elder or Minister to self-assess using the afore- mentioned exercise and have two or three other Elders also assess them using the criteria within the

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[9] Find the resources for Life Mapping at https://leaderbreakthru.com/timeline/

[10] Adapted from Ian Jagelman's The L Factor: Identifying and Developing Christian Leaders p99-107

exercise. This process is to be one of encouragement and will use the characteristics of the 'identity group.' The Elder will then identify any significant differences between their own assessment and the assessment of others, and these will be the subject of a conversation between fellow Elders.

The purpose of this process is to identify areas where progress can be made over time, and encouragement given.

Something Old and Something New

I realise that for most existing Sessions this is not current practice. It is something new and perhaps is seen as unnecessary and intrusive. I want to suggest that, given the role of the Elder & Minister, and given the characteristics of the overseer and the fundamental role Elders are to have in shaping the life of the church community by modelling maturity, being vulnerable with one another is modelling what we should be asking of our brothers and sisters. What appears new may in fact be old; not that Paul and Barnabas had post-it notes or had a *Key Leadership Evaluation for Emotional Intelligence*, but I have no doubt that just as Paul told his own story of God's work in his life and ministry, he invited others to tell theirs, and pursued Christ-like maturity and vulnerability in himself and his fellow-workers.

If the leadership of a church is committed to this level of Christ-like maturity, vulnerability and intimacy, the church community will find this becoming part of its spiritual DNA in its discipleship and Growth Groups.

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Question
How do you feel about the idea of being in an 'identity group' where you tell your story and work out where you could grow in relational leadership and godliness?

Key Leadership Evaluation for Emotional Intelligence

Name:

Please circle the score you feel represents where you are at, where 5 is high and1 is low. As you work through this sheet, underline competencies you feel particularly need to be addressed this year.

I. SELF-AWARENESS

a) Emotional Awareness

Recognising one's emotions and their effects.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Know which emotions they are feeling and why.
- Realise the links between their feelings and what they think, do, and say.
- Recognise how their feelings affect their performance.
- Have a guiding awareness of their values and goals.

b) Accurate Self-Assessment

Knowing one's inner resources, abilities, and limits.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence are:

- Aware of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Reflective, learning from experience.
- Open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development.
- Able to show a sense of humour and perspective about themselves.

c) Self-Confidence

A strong sense of one's self-worth in Christ and capabilities.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Present themselves with self-assurance — have "presence."
- Can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right.
- Are decisive, able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures.

2. SELF-GOVERNMENT

a) Self-Control

Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Manage their impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well.
- Stay composed, positive, and unflappable even in trying moments.
- Think clearly and stay focused under pressure.

b) Trustworthiness

Maintaining integrity.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence

- Act ethically and are above reproach.
- Build trust through their reliability and authenticity.
- Admit their own mistakes and confront unethical actions in others.
- Take tough, principled stands even if they are unpopular.

c) Conscientiousness

Taking responsibility for personal performance.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Meet commitments and keep promises.
- Hold themselves accountable for meeting their objectives.
- Are organised and careful in their work.

d) Adaptability

Being flexible in responding to change.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities, and rapid change.
- Adapt their responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances.
- Are flexible.

e) Innovation

Being open to novel ideas and approaches.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Seek out fresh ideas from a wide variety of sources.
- Entertain original solutions to problems.
- Generate new ideas.
- Take fresh perspectives and risks in their thinking.

3. PURPOSE LED

a) Achievement Drive

Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Are result-oriented, with a high drive to meet their objectives and standards,
- Set challenging goals and take calculated risks.
- Pursue information to reduce uncertainty and find ways to do better.
- Learn how to improve their performance.

b) Commitment

Aligning with the goals of a group or organisation.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Readily make sacrifices to meet larger organisational goals.
- Find a sense of purpose in the larger mission.
- Use the group's core values in making decisions and clarifying choices.
- Actively seeks out opportunities to fulfil the group's mission.

c) Initiative

Displaying proactivity.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Are ready to seize opportunities.
- Pursue goals beyond what is required or expected of them.
- Cut through red tape and bend the rules when necessary to get the job done.
- Mobilise others through unusual, enterprising efforts.

d) Optimism
Persistence.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Persist in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks.
- Operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure.
- See setbacks as due to manageable circumstances rather than a personal flaw.

4. PEOPLE FOCUS

a) Understanding Others
Sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Are attentive to emotional cues and listen well.
- Show sensitivity and understand others' perspectives.
- Help based on an understanding other people's needs and feelings.

b) Developing Others
Sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Acknowledge and reward people's strengths and accomplishments.
- Offer useful feedback and identify people's needs for further growth.
- Mentor, give timely coaching, and offer assignments that challenge and foster a person's skills.

c) Ministry Sensitive
Anticipating, recognising, and meeting visitors' and members' needs.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Understand members' needs and match them to ministries provided.
- Seek ways to increase members' satisfaction and loyalty.
- Gladly offer appropriate assistance.
- Grasp a member's perspective.

d) Synergy Sensitive

Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Respect and relate well to people from varied backgrounds.
- Understand diverse world-views and are sensitive to group differences.
- See diversity as opportunity, creating an environment where diverse people can thrive.
- Challenge bias and intolerance.

e) Power Awareness

Understanding personal and position power.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Accurately read key power relationships.
- Detect crucial social networks.
- Understand the forces that shape views and actions of members and visitors.
- Accurately read organisational and external realities.

5. INFLUENCE

a) Communication

Listening openly and sending messages.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Are effective in give-and-take, registering emotional cues in attuning their message.
- Deal with difficult issues straightforwardly.
- Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing of information fully.
- Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news as well as good.

b) Conflict Management

Negotiating and resolving disagreements.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact.
- Spot potential conflict, bring disagreements into the open, and help de-escalate situations.
- Encourage debate and open discussion.
- Orchestrate win—win solutions.

c) Leadership

Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Articulate and arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission.
- Step forward to lead as needed, regardless of position.
- Guide the performance of others while holding them accountable.
- Lead by example.

d) Change and Transition Management

Initiating or managing change.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Recognise the need for change and attempt to remove barriers.
- Challenge the status quo to acknowledge the need for change.
- Champion the change and enlist others in its pursuit.
- Model the change expected of others.
- Monitor the emotional impact of change.

e) Team Building

Nurturing instrumental relationships.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Cultivate and maintain extensive informal networks.
- Seek out relationships that are mutually beneficial.
- Build rapport and keep others in the loop.
- Make and maintain personal friendships among work associates.

f) Networking

Working with others toward shared goals.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

People with this competence:

- Balance a focus on task with attention to relationships.
- Collaborate, sharing plans, information, and resources.
- Promote a friendly, cooperative climate.
- Spot and nurture opportunities for collaboration.

g) Team Performance

Creating group cooperation in pursuing collective goals.

1   2   3   4   5

People with this competence:

- Model team qualities like respect, helpfulness, and cooperation.
- Draw all members into active and enthusiastic participation.
- Build team identity and commitment.
- Protect the group and its reputation; share credit.

Scores

Add your scores for each section. Then add each section to ascertain your total score.

1. Self-Perception   /15

2. Self-Government   /25

3. Purpose Led   /20

4. People Focus   /25

5. Influence   /35

Total   **/120**

(Adapted from Ian Jagelman The L Factor: Identifying and Developing Christian Leaders p99-107)