

Measuring Time:

In the service of The Almighty

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Measuring Time

Covenant eldership is in principle the work of the men who are recognized within their church as having gained the wisdom of a seasoned life, and who possess the skills needed to apply it in growth and preservation of the integrity of the church. Eldership is about wise and measured leadership in the home and also exercised within church congregations, and in the government of the wider body of the church. Life is very busy. The demands of the home are great, the needs of governance in the church no less so. Eldership is not limited to the work of the special offices of the church, it is a responsibility that falls to all men, in every place, for all are called to walk in the light of God's word.

It is in the nature of all men to experience conflicts¹ in time management. Time management is an important aspect of man's accountability^{2,3} to the Lord. It is vitally important that men understand the nature of time. So that man may comprehend his responsibilities in respect of time it is necessary to address ourselves to the attributes of time, its origin, and its directional characteristics.

The Lord created time before^{4,5} He in the most Divine wisdom^{6,7} called the universe into existence. On the whole men have a poor conception of time, tending to live each day as if immortal. Men are inclined not to consider their life's end⁸, purpose, direction, and the succession⁹ of their work to the able men of the next generation. Men must learn¹⁰ that present time, as we know it, leads forward to the Day of the Lord when at the sound of the great trumpet all men will find their place in eternity future.

1 **Ecclesiastes 3:1** - *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:"*

2 **Ecclesiastes 3:10** - *"I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with."*

3 **Ephesians 5:6-7** - *"not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,"*

4 **Acts 15:17-18** - *"that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old."* - Note: Not only does God know Himself through the Son and the Spirit, but all His works are fully known to Him from eternity past to eternity future.

5 **Dr. Francis Nigel Lee**, *Lee's fuller statement on Genesis*, page 50. Says: "At first," has a comma or tiphcha (,) -- in Genesis 1:1's first word "bereeyshi,yth." This means the commencement of time-as-such (Acts 15:18 and Hebrews 1:10). Cf. Procksch's *Genesis*, 1924, p. 440 -- where he remarks the tiphcha in beree'shiy,th is "to be taken absolutely, as indeed the Massoretic tiphcha intends." All this was prior to the commencement of the six days of the Earth's post-creational formation or further manufacture. For the work of each of those six days seems to have commenced only when God spoke for the first time, on each of those days. This is indicated by the formula "And God said" (in Genesis 1:3,6,9,14,20,24). On the period of created time before the first six days of the Earth's formation, cf. Genesis 1:1-2 with Proverbs 8:22f & Micah 5:1 & John 1:1.

6 **Psalms 33:11** - *"The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."*

7 **Jeremiah 23:18** - *"For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?"*

8 **Ecclesiastes 12:1** - *"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'"*

9 **Psalms 145:4** - *"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts."*

10 **Ecclesiastes 12:1** - *"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them';"*



It is demonstrated that within the created order God established principles for man's stewardship responsibilities. Man is accountable for management of his priorities and conduct¹¹ through all events during his lifetime on earth. For the whole of man's earthly walk time management and the observance of fidelity of walk are of paramount interest to those who live in the presence of the Living God.

When men can see with greater clarity those things that have already happened, than they can be aware of what is happening. The future is unpredictable, and the lack of clarity may seem dark and foreboding. Many men fear the future. Fear is the result of misplaced¹² trust, and poorly set expectations regarding the future. Time management requires wisdom and a focus of trust that is dependable and time-proven.

The elect in Christ can find their only comfort in the presence of the Living God who knows¹³ all things, sees all things, and from whom nothing¹⁴ can be hidden. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. In him is light alone, and that light alone overcomes the darkness¹⁵ of evil that is in the world.

Accountability to God

The key to our understanding of time within the scope of our relationship to the Lord God centers on our understanding and application of the creation narrative. The scriptures clearly assert that the Lord God Almighty created all that exists. Our understanding of the step-wise creation narrative, as taking place across a six-day twenty-four hour day/night, sequence has significant impact upon our apprehension of the Lord's decrees in respect of the flow of time. This in turn may prejudice the urgency¹⁶ with which a man may account for the stewardship of the time the Lord grants him.

Prior to the events of creation nothing¹⁷ existed. The *ex nihilo*¹⁸ creation is the work¹⁹ of God²⁰ who is in eternity past and in eternity future. Time is part of the created order. Before all time, the Triune God is.

11 **Romans 14:12** - "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God."

12 **Proverbs 9:10** - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

13 **Isaiah 40:13** - "Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel?"

14 **Psalms 139:16** - "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

15 **Matthew 6:22-23** - "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

16 **Romans 13:11-12** - "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. 12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

17 **John 1:3** - "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

18 **Hebrews 11:3** - "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

19 **Psalms 102:5** - "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands."

20 **John 1:1** - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."



Likewise, the Triune God is²¹ to all eternity. God is without days²² since he is not subjected²³ to time, rather he exercises governance²⁴ over time. At various times, God acted in good order to reverse the flow of time, to temporarily suspend the passage of time, or to redirect the passage of time.

That the Lord God changed the course of time is well attested in the scriptures. The Lord governed the trajectory²⁵ of time as he heard the call of Joshua at the confrontation with the kings of the Amorites. The Lord caused the sun dial to reverse so that Hezekiah would be assured of God deliverance from the hand of the king of Assyria²⁶.

Faith - its consequences

God is. This is not a negotiable matter. In the beginning, God created all things. Our belief regarding the works of God is a binary matter, we either receive and believe this by faith, or we reject what is declared. To receive and believe implies the necessity of life action that is in accord with this declaration. To reject this declaration is a denial of man being made to hear and think God's thoughts after him.

Those who reject the creation of the world as divine acts of a sovereign God, will have problems with many conceptual constructs, and in particular with understanding of the nature of time. How shall a created man find clarity in his dealing with and assimilation of concepts that are beyond man's control?

Men who are apart from God reject the declaration that the sovereign God created the world²⁷ and everything within it. They approach time and its effects as something that must be controlled. Rather than recognize time as a given aspect of reality that cannot be fully comprehended, it becomes a metaphysical or philosophical problem. Autonomous humanistic men seek to apply the best science they know of to bring about counter-aging means. They fall upon futile means in a bid to nullify the effects of the passage of time.

The Scriptures declares that the living God gives transcending meaning to time and to history. In the absence of God time is at best meaningless, and the enemy of existence. To those who do not know the

21 **Revelation 1:8** - "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

22 **Psalms 90:2** - "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

23 **Jude 1:25** - "to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

24 **Titus 1:2** - "In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."

25 **Joshua 10:12-13** - "At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.' And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies."

26 **Isaiah 38:7-8** - "This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised: 8 Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined."

27 **Revelation 4:11** - "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."



Lord, time is the passageway to death and destruction. Such men have no hope for the future in eternity so they dis-believe eternity, and as a result they dwell in darkness, and their aspirations are dark²⁸ also.

The man who knows the Lord God, also knows that his days are limited and full of purpose. Such limitation is not meaningless, because the Lord made him out of a wonderful design, to live in communion²⁹ with his creator. That communion and fellowship has eternal design – time is only a schoolroom in which he may learn to know his creator, and to follow him as life’s mentor and light. When his earthly days come to an end, he knows that glory awaits him.

Man - God’s dependent

In Genesis 1:16-31 God declares himself as the author of the design of man. He describes natural boundaries of the created man and the purposes for man as a governor³⁰ over all that God had made. In addition to what is explicitly declared we may see also, implicit provision for the man whom was yet to be made, so that following his being called into being there would be food for him to eat. Man was made to be in perpetual dependence upon his Creator. This is a logical consequence of man being created as the image-bearer of the Creator since he is not equal to the one he is the image of.

Creation & providence

In Genesis 1:24-25 God declares that day in the creation order was divinely set out to provide for the next recorded day’s event. From these we may see how the Lord’s hand graciously provided for all that he had made. Each new creation day was designed as a symphony that grew richer, more full, telling of intricate detail in all the elements of creation that the Lord called into being.

The Lord brought forth out of his design, and by his decrees provided to support of all life. Above all, we should note that the Lord looked upon all that he had made at each major creative event, and he declared it good. We must understand from this that there was no error, no defect, and no unlawfulness in any of what had been made. The garden into which the Lord would place man was a delightfully perfect³¹ university that so far lacked a being who would learn and further develop what God had provided.

Man - the image of God

The Genesis 1 account of the creation of man must be carefully considered. According to the writer (understood to be Moses), God said (Genesis 1:26) *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* This verse is exceedingly densely packed.

28 **Romans 1:25** “because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

29 **John 14:26** - *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

30 **Genesis 2:15** - *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”*

31 **Genesis 1:25** - *“... And God saw that it was good.”*



It is clear from Genesis 1:26 that God is speaking. The text shows that the decrees of the Lord God and were made in a fellowship of full covenant communion within the Godhead. God created man (Adam) in the likeness of the Divine Being. It is clear that the purpose for which God created man was to follow a pattern of life that mirrors³² the Creator himself.

Covenant communion

That God said, “*Let us make man*”, points to the realization that the Divine Being is a communion plurality of persons, yet there is but one Divine Being. Put another way, there is one essence of Being in the Godhead, yet there exist three distinct divine persons. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The scriptures speak of the Father as God³³, Jesus as God³⁴, and the Holy Spirit³⁵ as God.

The Father and Son being persons is generally accepted. The cognition of the Holy Spirit as a person is neglected by many well-meaning people. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, or a power. That the Holy Spirit is a person is seen in how he³⁶ is addressed³⁷. The Holy Spirit speaks as a person³⁸, he reasons³⁹, he thinks and understands⁴⁰, he wills⁴¹, he feels⁴², and personally communes⁴³. Without any ambiguity these are all attributes of persons.

The words “*Let us make man ...*” speaks boldly of a covenant communion within the Divine Being. In his book, John Murray says⁴⁴ the following:

*“From the beginning of God’s disclosures to men in terms of covenant we find a unity of conception which is to the effect that a **divine covenant is a sovereign administration of grace and of promise**. It is not compact or contract or agreement that provides the constitutive or*

32 **Psalm 24:1** - “*The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein*”

33 **Philippians 1:2** - “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

34 **Titus 2:3** - “*... waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...*”

35 **Acts 5:3-4** - “*But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart **to lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man **but to God.**”* - emphasis added.

36 **John 14:26** - “*... he will teach you all things ...*”. **John 16:7-15**, see v.8 - “*And when he comes, he will ...*”

37 **Acts 8:16** - “*... and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for **he** had not yet fallen on any of them ...*”

38 **Hebrews 3:7** - “*... as the Holy Spirit says,*”

39 **Acts 15:28** - “*For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements:*”

40 **1 Corinthians 2:10-11** - “*... For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ...*”

41 **1 Corinthians 12:11** - “*All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*”

42 **Ephesians 4:30** - “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ...*”

43 **2 Corinthians 13:14** - “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*”

44 **The Covenant of Grace**, John Murray, Tyndale Press, pages 30-31. This book was given as a lecture at Selwyn Cambridge, July 6, 1953, at a meeting convened by Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research.



*governing idea but that of dispensation in the sense of disposition.” (page 30), and “And when we remember that covenant is not only bestowment of grace, not only oath-bound promise, but also relationship with God in that which is the crown and goal of the whole process of religion, namely, union and communion with God, we discover again that the new covenant brings this relationship also to the highest level of achievement. **At the center of covenant revelation as its constant refrain is the assurance 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people'**” (Page 31). (Emphasis added).*

It seems reasonable to take to heart God’s covenant decree from the words, “*Let us make man*” - this comes out of the true communion of the life of the Divine Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In light of this Divine covenant communion, that man is made as the image-bearer of God, and of God’s promise to dwell⁴⁵ with man, we should note well the responsibilities that we derive from this. Man was given an extreme privilege of communion in Christ. These things bind the elect to a walk of life that reflects the glory of the Living God who has designed them for his own glory, in Christ.

Covenant responsibilities

The *image of God* is defined as the metaphysical expression, associated uniquely to mankind. It expresses more than a symbolical relationship between God the Creator⁴⁶, and the man whom he made. God is not like the creature he has made, his being is infinitely above and beyond man. Man was made to fit into a time-capsule, so to speak. God is outside⁴⁷ of that time-capsule, and yet God condescends⁴⁸ to man. Life within the time-capsule is finite. Outside the time-capsule is infinite eternity that is upheld by the Divine Being, and is ordered comprehensively to his glory.

Man differs from all animals the Lord created. Man has self-consciousness, is of a reasonable mind – that is able to reason. Man has the capacity to deliberate and make decisions, he makes decisions that have realizable consequences. Man has a certain orientation for self-preservation that can anticipate future needs and work towards providing for them. Man has desires⁴⁹, can choose to love one’s self, and others, and therefore, can also reject and deny God.

Adam was designed to work. His work was to occupy himself with glorifying God by doing certain things. He was to exercise dominion over all that the Lord had placed within the garden of Eden, to develop it further, to nurture it. His work was to govern the heavens, the earth and the waters on and under the earth. As the image bearer of the Lord God, man could only faithfully exercise his calling in communion with his creator.

45 **Revelations 21:3** - “*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”*”

46 **Exodus 3:15** - “*God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”*”

47 **2 Peter 3:8** - “*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*”

48 **Exodus 3:14** - “*God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”*”

49 **Psalm 34:12** - “*What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good?”*”



Sadly, many of the attributes that characterize the unique human condition have led man to be estranged from the Divine Being, unless by a covenant act of mercy God acting upon and changing the heart of man deigns otherwise. Through Adam, sin entered⁵⁰ into the created order. By sin, man set his heart according the perverted concepts of the mind, the things of the flesh. The things of the flesh lead to death and destruction. The mind of the flesh is hostile to God's law, it cannot submit to him, and cannot please God. Not even the sweetest act of those who are hostile to Christ will please the Lord – this goes against all human concepts of the benefits of man's well-meant actions towards his neighbor.

Time and dominion

Genesis 1 introduces the foundational origins of all that exists – hear how he says: *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). Verses 2-25 describes what God made. He made all things in good order. How do we know that all that God had made was good? In verse 25 God himself says so: *“And God saw that is was good.”* We receive the assertions God made in Genesis 1 in faith, in good trust with the confidence that God is the all-knowing, and he is the fountain of all goodness. These verses introduce us to the essential understanding that the work of creation included initiation⁵¹ of time and the creation of all that exists as part of the created order.

We note with awe that God made the distinction of light from darkness that resulted from the work of creation - *“There was evening and there was morning, the first day.”* (Genesis 1:5). The created order was therefore established to follow a sequenced flow of events. That flow of events was set out in a defined order. The order of all events is shown in Genesis to be linear⁵², except when God acts to otherwise temporarily govern the flow of time. The second day (Genesis 1:7) followed the first day. Each day⁵³ thereafter follows the one before it, and each was important as shown by it being mentioned.

We may conclude that the Lord God created the natural order according to laws and rules that He maintains. These principles, laws, rules, designs, are set upon a predictable and knowable trajectory. If any of these were to change even in a very small degree, the whole created order would collapse and cease to be except that God can, and has at certain points held the universe together while he redirected to flow of time for specific purposes. There is therefore good reason to hold firmly to each day of creation being of twenty-four hours duration.

50 **Romans 5:12** - *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—”*

51 The beginning marked the first moment of time. God's first work of creation established that which marks the passage of time. Scripture records no time before the beginning's first moment, thus Scripture leaves no space for the concept of evolutionary aeons. Before there was time God is. He is the great I AM. God, the Lord, declares what He has created. He declares that as a foundational fact of trust and truth. The creation narrative cannot satisfy an investigation of truth that begins with any presupposition other than God's self-revelation of His Word.

52 **Ecclesiastes 1:5** - *“The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.”*

53 *The Meaning of “Day” in Genesis 1-2*, R.J. Rushdoony - <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/the-meaning-of-day-in-genesis-1-2>



At this point it should be acknowledged that the creation order account of Genesis 1 presents problems for some scientific⁵⁴ minds. It is not our purpose here to delve into the specific nature of the sequence of events that are well known to the Lord, and that remain hidden⁵⁵ from men. It is sufficient to recognize that the Lord created the known universe, and in so doing he established time, seasons, and the linear passage of time.

The Genesis 1 *ex nihilo* creation narrative described the beginning of God's great Covenant plan. Genesis 1 and 2 instruct us that our Covenanting Deity made all things for His own glory, carefully and precisely manufacturing the greatest and the most minute ecosystems necessary to sustain mankind in a most glorious garden, the garden of Eden. The first Adam was made in the likeness of the Triune Deity to think His thoughts after Him, and to fulfill the mandate given him. Genesis 3 narrates how sin entered into the created order with devastating effect. Yet, the Triune Deity would not have His work destroyed, instead making the most profound promise of Covenant redemption and rescue for the effects of man's fall into the darkness of sin.

It is also important to recognize that the as a consequence of sin the created order is aging and wearing out. The loss of entropy⁵⁶ that can be seen in the fallen state of the universe means that what we can measure and see today is a consequence of sin that entered⁵⁷ into the world. The scriptures are silent on how the intersection of time and circumstance behaved prior to man's fall in the first Adam. There is no need to speculate beyond what the scriptures declare. God has revealed all we need to know for our salvation from the ravages of evil and the wages thereof.

Universal laws & the progress of time

Men with a scientific mind and possessing great numeracy have discovered many observable physical constants that help us to understand the predictable behavior of the course of natural phenomena. These physical quantities are generally held to be universal in nature, and thus are independent of what is being measured. All the universal constants obey a known relationship with other physical constants, and therefore can be determined from them. Examples of these universal physical constants includes: the speed of light in a vacuum, the Planck⁵⁸ constant, Boltzmann's⁵⁹ constant, the mass of atomic particles (electrons, protons, Neutrons, muons, taus, quarks), and many more.

Answering the physicists

Any uncertainty⁶⁰ in respect of the universal laws or constants⁶¹ reflects our lack of knowledge, and is strongly dependent on how they are defined. For example, the exact weight of a steel ball varies with

54 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/bill-nye-risks-not-debating-creationists-180953249/>

55 **Deuteronomy 29:29** - “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*”

56 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entropy>

57 **Romans 8:22-23** - “*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies*”

58 NIST – The Planck Constant - <https://www.nist.gov/physics/what-planck-constant>

59 See: <https://oyc.yale.edu/physics/phys-200/lecture-22>



the strength of gravity. Gravitational pull varies over the earth – this fact that can be measured. Yet, there are finite limits to the degree to which such measurement can determine the absolute value of gravitational pull, and thus the absolute weight of the ball must be specified with reference to the temperature, and location at which it is measured, as well as with reference to the standards by which its scales were calibrated. Short of that precision there is but a best-estimate value only centering on Plank’s constant.

In 1900 Max Plank was researching the observed spectral distribution of thermal radiation from a closed furnace (black-body radiation). His research followed work done by Kirchhoff 40 years earlier. Every physical body spontaneously and continuously emits electromagnetic radiation. Plank found a mathematical construct that is now known as Planks Law. This law finds application in quantum mechanics. Significantly, scientists now understand that even a seemingly insignificant discrepancy in the value of Planks constant has radical long-term impact of the overall viability of the all matter.

The discovery of Planck’s constant advanced the realization that, when we probe the deepest levels of the structure of matter, we are no longer looking at “things” in the conventional meaning of the word. A “thing”—like a moving car—has a definite location and velocity; a car may be 30 miles south of Los Angeles heading east at 40 miles per hour. The concepts of location, velocity, and even existence itself blur at the atomic and subatomic level. Electrons do not exist in the sense that cars do, they are, bizarrely, everywhere at once, but much more likely to be in some places than in others. Reconciling the probabilistic subatomic world with the macroscopic everyday world is one of the great unsolved problems in physics. Planck’s constant tells us how the universe is numerically fine-tuned⁶² to permit life to exist.

A recent book⁶³ claims that given the assembly of known improbabilities of an immense number of improbable requirements that had to be in place for our universe to become what it is, there is a problem. Physicists have described a number of physical constants (which are dimensionless or dimensioned numbers) that determine the interrelationship between space, time and energy. Some examples includes the “Plank minimums” of space and time, the speed of light, the gravitational attraction constant, the weak force coupling constant, and a whole slew of others (Spitzer⁶⁴ identifies 20 such universal constants) – if any were to fall outside of a very narrow range, there would be no universe⁶⁵ as we know it. This highly improbable number is so improbable as to render the probability virtually nil, especially in a universe that is only 13.7 billion years old according to some claims of men

60 For an excellent discussion of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle see: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qt-uncertainty/>

61 NIST - Meet the Constants - <https://www.nist.gov/si-redefinition/meet-constants>

62 <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/plancks-constant/>

63 *New Proofs for the Existence of God*, Robert J. Spitzer, <http://www.amazon.com/New-Proofs-Existence-God-Contributions/dp/0802863833>

64 See: <https://science.nasa.gov/missions/spitzer/10-things-spitzer-taught-us-about-our-solar-system/>

65 *The improbability of life*, George M. Whitesides, 2008, In *Fitness of the Cosmos for Life: Biochemistry and Fine Tuning*, edited by J. D. Barrows, S. C. Morris, S. J. Freeland, and C. L. Harper Jr., Pp. Foreword xi - xix. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press., Cambridge University Press.



who identify with a certain character of what is broadly called science. This book suggests some sort of intelligent, supernatural hand that had to intervene to even out the odds, to wit, God.

Concluding remarks

The Lord God upholds the created order by laws which he sustains⁶⁶ by his Word alone. This is a statement of faith in the predictable nature of all that God has made. Those who reject the God who created all things have merely randomness⁶⁷ and chaos to explain observable attributes of the physical universe.

All that the Lord created, even in its state after the fall is perfectly⁶⁸ made. All matter is intricately precise in its design, and to man is infinitely complex. There is much work for men to do to better understand the created order. There is much to contemplate in creation, so much to discover and for which man may praise and worship⁶⁹ the living God. There is much in which a steward of time may occupy himself and engage his fellow creatures to the glory of the Lord.

God provided in his self-revelation sufficient to know him, to live and serve him. There is also ample evidence that we must treat the time⁷⁰ the Lord gives each person with the respect that is due, and with gratitude in our hearts.

A survey of time stewardship

The Christian Bible is a remarkable book. Inside its pages are many parallel narratives each painting a glorious illustration of God's works; The creation of man, the assignment of duties for him to perform, and the fruit of his labors. It also speaks of man's fall into sin, and the wages thereof. In Adam all men fell into sin, and as a result the nature of all men are polluted by sin. The introduction of sin broke the communion of men with the Divine Being. The remarkable testimony of the scriptures given by God is that he withheld the upper hand from the Serpent (the Evil one), and in Genesis 3:15 gave a Covenant promise of redemption. The Creator's purposes could not be undone by the power of the evil one.

At the appointed⁷¹ time, the crushing of the head of the Serpent was set in motion. That work was completed by Jesus Christ, the appointed redeemer who is both God and man. Jesus is the Son of God in his divine nature. Co-eternal godhead the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit – and at the same time. In his humanity Jesus is also the perfect man. The gospel record is that Jesus made atonement for men, justifying them before the Father, and in that the communion between God and men is restored.

66 **Psalm 145:15-16** - *"The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. 16 You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing."*

67 <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-randomness-rules-our-world/>

68 **Psalm 145:17** - *"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works."*

69 **1 Corinthians 2:16** - *"For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."*

70 **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."*

71 **Romans 16:20** - *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."*



The overwhelming theme throughout the Bible describes how the Lord is sovereign over all he has made, how he brings up men in their own time and place to perform services that to one extent or another mark him out as a particular character. Some characters are more memorable than others. Some who lived long ago are remembered for particular events, actions, undertakings, and service in God's world.

Most men live their lives almost in anonymity, and it seems many are swept away in time not to be remembered for anything of a remarkable nature. This happens to the faithful as well as those who are unfaithful to God. In the Bible we read of men like Adam, Able, Cain, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, and so on. Rightly so, each served a divine purpose. Each did things by which they are remembered. Each lived in a window of time that later would become most significant. Many other men lived and died with barely a trace by which they may be remembered. Time has swept^{72,73} them away.

Adam most foolishly disobeyed the Lord. He transgressed the law of God, and by doing this he broke the terms of the Covenant of Works – the Law given by the Lord that man may live perpetually. This action was staggering and beyond our comprehension. After all, he had the best of all circumstances and perfect communion with the Lord. The fall and the decline of the world is the legacy of the first Adam.

The Lord decreed to save man (the man and the descendants of the first Adam) from his sin and promised deliverance that would crush the head⁷⁴ of the serpent. Following his fall into sin, he became much aware of time. His labors would from now on incur the sweat⁷⁵ of his brow. He lost heart for the labors for which he was made, and now was called to labor under duress. Time had lost its bright edge, it was replaced with disappointment upon disappointment, toil and sweat, and above all uncertainties. The weight of time and uncertainty and calamity were the new reality of a fallen world, so unlike time before the fall.

In Noah's day the Lord covenanted⁷⁶ with him and ordered him to build the Ark, then God poured out judgment⁷⁷ upon the world, sparing only Noah and his family. Having seen the Lord's judgment against

72 **Psalm 90:5** - *"You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning:"*

73 **Job 27:21** - *"The east wind lifts him up and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place."*

74 **Genesis 3:15** - *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

75 **Genesis 3:17** - *"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;'"...*

76 **Genesis 6:5-8** - *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."*

77 **Genesis 7:6** - *"Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth."*



sinful men being poured out, despite being saved from destruction⁷⁸, Noah was affected by sin, that he too acted according to his sinful desires. Even so, he was a recipient of promised redemption, a promise that was consummated in covenant⁷⁹ with Abram, whom God renamed to Abraham. That new name was a sign and seal of God's promises.

Abraham was called by the Lord, and was given the promise that he would be the father of many nations, leading to Christ (the second Adam – the heir of all things). Through his lineage many would be blessed, but Abraham also saw the consequences of sin in his own life, and in the known world. Abraham was a wealthy and powerful man. His household⁸⁰ included 318 servants. His days were full of significance and his time served great purpose. The Lord informed him that his descendants would spend 400+ years in Egypt, but the Lord would bring them back⁸¹ to the land of promise.

Joseph, Jacob's son, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, was sold into slavery into Egypt. The promise to Abraham was well under way. Some 400 years later, the Lord called⁸² Moses to deliver the descendants of Jacob from the hand of the Egyptian king, Pharaoh – the house of the great one. At the call of the Lord from a burning bush Moses was summoned to deliver the people of Israel (the sons of Jacob) by a mightier hand than that of Pharaoh. In Moses' day, the Lord fulfilled the promise given to Abraham. Moses' time also was full of the impact of time and calamity. Moses was forbidden from entering the land of promise as a result of his transgressions. He and the people of Israel offended the Lord by unlawful actions. We can learn much of the character of Moses from Psalm 90.

Time – From everlasting to everlasting

Consider Psalm 90, a chapter that provides great insight into the importance of fidelity of man's conduct and use of time. This Psalm opens with the words: *“From Everlasting to Everlasting, A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.”*

78 **Genesis 8:21-22** - *“And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”*

79 **Genesis 15:18** - *“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, ...”*

80 **Genesis 14:14** - *“When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.”*

81 **Genesis 15:13-16** - *“Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”*

82 **Exodus 3:7-8** - *“7 Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.”*



Psalm 90 begins Book Four of the Psalter. It is understood to be perhaps the oldest Psalm, and was written by Moses some time around 1440 BC. In his prayer Moses declares the sovereign eternal nature of God. He speaks of the fickle and fragile nature of fallen men. He recognizes the justice and mercy of God, and laments the foolishness of men. In the last section of this Psalm Moses sees the need for Divine intervention in the lives of men so they may learn to great mercy and kindness of their God. He seeks the favor⁸³ of the Lord to be upon his chosen ones.

The opening two verses declare that the Lord is eternal and without days. God made the mountains and formed the earth and the universe. Even so, God is merciful and has drawn⁸⁴ his people to himself and has protected them.

Moses recognizes that man was made from the dust of the earth. Man is a material being, unlike the eternal God who is Spirit. Man has a spirit because God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. When his time has run its course, man is swept away as dust, but the Lord presides over the short time man has on this earth. Man is like new grown grass, in the morning he flourishes and by evening sunset man fades away. His influence upon the world is gone. We recognize the urgency⁸⁵ of time, we have few days to serve the Lord.

God sees and knows all the secret sins of men, and judges them all. The outcome of God's anger brings men to their end. Moses acknowledges man's sinful nature, his shortcomings, and what to man is the incomprehensible perfect nature of God. If not for God's mercy, men are without hope.

Man's time is short and passes quickly and our sins kindle the Lord's judgment, then we expire. All seventy or eighty years, if the Lord grants us that many, drag man through the tyranny of time and uncertainty. When he is young and virile man has no concept of time, he presumes to be immortal. When time and age catch up with him he begins to despise the troubles of life. Man often sees the urgency of being reconciled with his maker too late to change the course of his life.

In verses 12-17 Moses gets to the crux of his prayer. He recognizes that Divine pity, intervention and relief, are the only solution for men whose hearts are darkened by sin. Moses prays that the Lord may teach him to value every day that he is given, to rightly use each breath and each heartbeat to serve the

83 **Deuteronomy 6:1-3**- *“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. **Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.**”* - Note well how the emphasized text demonstrates Moses desire for the favor of the Lord upon the people of Israel.

84 **Psalm 90:1** - *“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.”*

85 Urgency of time is perhaps better expressed as *“Temporal Awareness”* – As a child matures comes also a self-consciousness of the rhythms of life, the challenges of dividing one's attentions and efforts across competing interests or necessities, and eventually the recognition of the need to trade against the limits of time and circumstance. It is the refined effort of particular focus that permits the acquisition of specific skills and dexterities. These grow out of temporal awareness that drives the will towards desired outcomes at the expense of other possibilities.



Lord and to do his bidding. Yet Moses knows his own heart, his own hardness, only the Lord can teach wisdom to recognize that the time we have must of necessity be managed carefully. Every breath is precious.

Only the love and mercy of God can give man purposeful joy in life. When men see the majestic work of the Lord in their lives they find shelter from the evil that is in the world. Oh that the Lord may show his work and draw the chosen children of God to his bosom, that they may see the Lord's favor, and in God's wisdom find that their work serves a delightful purpose. When the Lord blesses the work of his servants, their name is replaced with His name, and his work is remembered through their hands.

The time the Lord gives his servants is precious, so men are to recognize each call to duty. The Lord places opportunities upon our life's path, if not directed to serve him they are lost and fleet away. The Lord gave man a dominion mandate. Sin and its consequences make the exercise of the performance of duties within the journey of life difficult, but those who call upon the Name of the Lord will strength to perform their duties⁸⁶ and glory in him.

Time and Duty

All men have a Divine calling unto obedience. All men are accountable to the Lord for their conduct of life, and shall give account to their Creator at the last great day. What is true of all men in general is particularly applicable to men who are called specifically to serve as officers within Christ's church. When considering eldership work within the church our focus is on time management. Time management is a skill that is learned with age. It is a skill that requires constant practice, even in old age.

The term *elder* as used in the Old Testament (*zaqen*) is derived⁸⁷ from the Hebrew word meaning *beard* (*zaqan*). One who has a full beard is no longer a young man, but one who has gained experience in life. The use of the term elder (from the Greek word *presbyteros*) means "old/er man." It is understood that wisdom^{88,89} and experience⁹⁰ come with age⁹¹. Men who have gained wisdom of age have a duty to pass their wisdom⁹² on to the next generation. Those who are recognized as men of wisdom within the church may be called to serve in the special office of ruling elder.

86 **Isaiah 40:31** - "but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

87 **Van Dam, Cornelis**, 1944-current, *The Elder: today's ministry rooted in all of Scripture*, ISBN978-1-59638-14 (pbk.). Chapter 3, p.27.

88 **Job 12:12** - "Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days."

89 **Deuteronomy 32:7** - "Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you."

90 **Isaiah 46:4** - "even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."

91 **Leviticus 19:32** - "You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the Lord."

92 **Proverbs 23:22-25** - "Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice."



Elders are called to serve⁹³ God's people. Service takes time! There is no need for apology for the time it takes to serve the Lord's people faithfully. Such service is a holy calling, and therefore it is work that demands careful time management. Elders should pay attention to Paul's advice: *"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* (Ephesians 5:15-17).

We must empathize with ministers and ruling elders who weigh the burdens of time, patience, attention to detail, study in the scriptures to prepare for the work of elders, application of doctrine and adherence to process and procedures. However, no matter how much we may empathize with the toll these take, nothing can lessen the call of duty.

The strength and energy needed is supplied by the Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit. This may sound tough, but the advice of an old Frisian elder took a spoon of sugar to consume; He said: *"When you stumble and fall, just remember you're not the first and you won't be the last. Get up, continue working!"* Then he mumbled words to the effect that Jesus had to carry his own cross, was weighed down by the load, got up and continued until his work was done. Work that is necessary and worth doing must be seen through to its end.

To God one day is as a thousand⁹⁴ years and a thousand years as one day⁹⁵. He sees the past, present, and the future as one continuum. Unlike God, man is temporal and finite. In this life, man is confined to twenty-four hours each day and to a predefined number of days for the life by which God has decreed to bind his earthly existence.

Time - finite and precious

Everyone has precisely the same amount of time every day. This startles those who believe that the world is full of unconscionable inequalities and an unfair distribution of resources. It is also common practice to say much regarding a perceived shortage of time to complete things that men find must be done. Despite having an over-abundance of time-saving tools at our disposal, it seems that people all around us complain of a shortage of time. The problem we each face daily is not the amount of time a sovereign God has allotted to us, but our view of time and life itself, and how we use the time we have. God is not bound or limited by time. God transcends all time. He created time and set boundaries that limit the scope of man's actions in this life. The profound effect of the introduction of sin into the world by the first Adam, is that man is now subject to the tyranny of limitations that are imposed by the boundaries of a man's lifespan.

93 **1 Peter 5:2-4** - *"shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."*

94 **1 Timothy 1:17** - *"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen"*

95 **2 Peter 3:8** - *"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."*



The Psalmist^{96,97} said: “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.*” He added also⁹⁸ these words: “*Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*” It is therefore noteworthy that the acquisition of wisdom takes precious time – time that must be measured and weighed. It must be used wisely and without permitting opportunity to serve the Lord slip away.

Redeeming time

Distractions are everywhere present – they will not go away if they are not sent away. Men must learn to send away distraction that is not critical. Let the pressing important issues prevail. As much as you will well plan the use of time, remember that⁹⁹, “*The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*” and again¹⁰⁰, “*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*” A commentary¹⁰¹ about this verse notes:

There are many lessons that God's people have to learn and often it takes a lifetime to pass the different tests the Lord sets for each one of us. The book of Proverbs is filled with examples of both godly living, (behavior we should seek to emulate), and unwise actions, (things we should eschew and avoid.)

There are many biblical principles to follow in this book of instructions, and many wise practices to develop. As we journey through life we should earnestly seek to develop these behaviors and attitudes, as we grow in grace and in a knowledge of the Lord Jesus. One such concept to embrace with understanding is, "The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." We may make future plans and purpose in our heart how to achieve our desired goals, but God is the one who directs our path. He is the One Who establishes the steps we take.

Making plans for the future is wise and prudent. The Lord designed us with minds to think. He gave us a free-will to make wise choices in life. The Bible advises virtuous living and prudent planning for we read, "those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness" and, "plans are made by seeking wise and godly advice from others."

Men commonly generally have contempt for the future. Men tend to live as if they are immortal. Some men, as they learn the lessons of life, and particularly as richness of God’s Covenantal blessings dawns upon them, they realize that by taking care of the truly important matters they are taking care of the future. Time management is a future oriented activity. We should take careful note of that when Jesus

96 **Psalm 111:10** - “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!*”

97 **Proverbs 9:10** - “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*”

98 **Psalm 90:12** - “*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*”

99 **Proverbs 16:9** - “*The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.*”

100 **Proverbs 19:21** - “*Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.*”

101 Extracted from: <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/proverbs-16-9>



addressed anxiety¹⁰² in life, he was not implying that the future does not matter – he amplified the correct way to be future minded. That way begins with setting our hearts on the Lord, to do his bidding with fidelity and in trust knowing that he has our very best interests at heart.

Belief about time and time management

Time management is the application and execution of beliefs about time. You can change some of the circumstances of life, but you can never bring back lost time. The Lord will hold each of us to account for how we used the time he has given. Added to this is the simple fact that no man knows how much time (how many days) the Lord has foreordained that he shall walk on this earth. The length of a man's temporal existence seems to him to be most indeterminate. How a man lives is a reflection of the value he places on each moment he has been gifted from on high.

Church officers (ministers and ruling elders) must manage their time well. Elders must demonstrate effective leadership^{103,104} in the home. This means that they must balance family life well, so that they can diligently execute the responsibilities of office in the church. An experienced elder often exhorted young men with these words: “*Never leave till tomorrow that which could have been done yesterday.*” On the outside he was seen as a good steward, always finding time to do what needed to be done. Inwardly he spent much time in prayer, asking the Lord to make him a better servant. He asked that the Lord may quench his grumbling and give him a heart that radiated gratitude for every call to duty.

The writer of the book to the Hebrews¹⁰⁵ reminds us that “*life is like a race to which the inheritance of the kingdom of God forms the goal. Just as one who is in the racecourse running for a prize makes the attainment of this end his supreme—his only concern—so the true believer obeys but the fundamental law of his Christian calling when he concentrates his mind and energy upon the future.*” (Geerhardus

102 **Matthew 6:25-34** - “*Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*”

103 **1 Timothy 3:1-4** - “*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ”*”

104 **Titus 1:5b-6** - “*and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.”*”

105 **Hebrews 12:1-3** - “*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.”*”



Vos¹⁰⁶)

Elders must control how time is used – time stewardship¹⁰⁷ is a learned skill, time is the only resource you can manage. It is important to the functions of each man’s Divine calling to make room for planning, doing the important work first, and for appropriate handling of interruptions.

Time and the work of the Church

The word “Church” is a translation from the Greek word, *ekklesia*. This term has been used in the New Testament era to identify a local assembly of gatherings of the saints for public worship. The word literally means “assembly”, “congregation”, “gathering”, or “meeting”. The Old Testament referred to “the assembly”, “the congregation”, “the Lord’s congregation”, “the meeting before/with the Lord.”

Jesus said¹⁰⁸, “I will build my church”, and¹⁰⁹, “Tell it to the church” In this he was understood by his followers. What he referred to was the local places at which people gathered for public worship and for instruction in the sacred scriptures, and for oversight and nurture of care.

The earliest local gatherings took place in synagogues, and it is out of these places of gathering that the early Christian assemblies first emerged. The early Christian church was considered by many governors¹¹⁰ to be a depraved¹¹¹ and illegal¹¹² religion. The history of the spread of Christianity following Pentecost¹¹³ as recorded in the book of The Acts¹¹⁴ of the Apostles marked the beginning of

106 **Grace and Glory**, Geerhardus Vos, Chapter 10, page 70, Subtitle: The Race as Prospective.

107 To redeem something means to regain possession of it by suitable means. Time is a gift from God, and none of us knows the total length of our lifetime. Only God has appointed time to every man on this earth. Whatever way he may choose to make decisions he will impact eternity (Psalm 139:16). When we say we should be “redeeming the time,” this means that we must live in constant awareness of the ticking clock and determine to use our time wisely.

108 **Matthew 16:18** “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

109 **Matthew 18:17** “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

110 **Acts 8:3** - “But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.”

111 **Acts 4:1-3** - “And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ”

112 **Acts 5:17-18** - “But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.”

113 **Acts 2:1** - “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. “ - Pentecost came from the Greek word ‘Pentekostos’, which means ‘fifty’. It’s the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week and in Judaism is called the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:16).

114 **Acts 2:5-8** - “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”



the gospel reaching across the whole known world, for on that one day¹¹⁵ we read that over 3,000 people were added to the number of the faithful.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was long foretold by the prophet Joel¹¹⁶, as the time when the Holy Spirit would come and the great gathering in of the elect would begin.

The first mention of the use of the word “church” relates to a geographically localized gathering or a collection of gatherings, such as “*the churches of Galatia*.” Galatia was a region that had many cities, and therefore likely more than one place of the gathering of the saints. Paul refers to the churches at a place like Corinth¹¹⁷, or Ephesus, etc. In each he identifies places that had many residents.

We may speculate, but likely each place had more than one assembly or gathering of saints for worship and fellowship. Each gathering of believers had its own standards of conduct¹¹⁸ and belief. Membership in a local body was governed by these standards, and disruptive disagreement with these standards almost certainly was grounds to exclude those who by their actions caused division or caused troubles to flair up. Overseers were responsible to maintain the peace, harmony, and unity of the local church¹¹⁹ gathering – no doubt taking considerable commitment of time, patience, and continued study in the Scriptures.

In the churches of Jesus Christ members must be committed to each other, to the living Triune God, and therefore the church body was of necessity something greater than the sum of its parts. The Apostles regularly addressed themselves to problems¹²⁰ and disruptions that emerged within local gatherings or congregations. Acts 15 describes the circumstances that led to the calling together of the first great church synod. This synod, church council, was called to address emerging heresies within the

115 **Acts 2:41** - “... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Also **Acts 4:4** - “But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”

116 **Joel 2:28-29** - “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”

117 **1 Corinthians 1:2** “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:”

118 **Acts 15:1-3** – “1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question. 3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers.”

119 **Acts 15:25-29** - “25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

120 **1 Corinthians 11:17-19** - “17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.”



churches. Apostles, teaching elders, and elders were sent by the various churches to gather the wisdom of the plurality of elders to decide how best to establish the peace, purity, and harmony of the churches.

The Great Jerusalem Council took much time and effort. Men traveled for many days from the remotest churches to attend this event in Jerusalem. The brothers who held this council were sent back to the churches that had sent them, bearing a letter testifying to the peace¹²¹ of Zion that was found in the work of many faithful men.

The immense labors of elders of the early churches, just as it is today, consumes much¹²² time, patience, diligence, purpose, and expense of resources. The labor of the elders of the church is demanding work.

Jesus, the Chief Officer

Jesus Christ holds the chief of offices, also referred to in Isaiah¹²³ as the cornerstone. Paul makes clear that this refers to Jesus Christ¹²⁴. Jesus is the Chief Head who holds all things together as the cornerstone fulfills the three offices¹²⁵ of Prophet, Priest, and King. These offices are well described in the catechisms of the Westminster Confession¹²⁶ of Faith.

The OPC Book of Church Order (BCO), Form of Government (FG), Chapter V, says regarding the offices in the church:

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ established his church of the new covenant on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The apostles were appointed to be witnesses to the risen Christ, testifying in the Holy Spirit to what they had seen and heard, heralding the gospel to the world, and grounding the church in the teaching of Christ. Together with the prophets they spoke by revelation, recording in the Scriptures of the New Testament the fullness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. When their testimony was completed, their calling and office were not continued in the church and the powers and signs that endued and sealed their ministry ceased.

2. Our Lord continues to build his church through the ministry of men whom he calls and endues with special gifts for teaching, ruling, and serving. Some of these special gifts can be most profitably exercised only when those who possess them have been publicly recognized as

121 **Acts 15:30-31** - “So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. 31 And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.”

122 **Acts 15:36** - “And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.””

123 **Isaiah 28:16-17** - “therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: “Whoever believes will not be in haste.””

124 **Ephesians 2:19-22** - “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

125 **Westminster Confessions of Faith**, Chapter 8, Of Christ the Mediator.

126 **Westminster Shorter Catechism**, Questions 23-26.



called of Christ to minister with authority. It is proper to speak of such a publicly recognized function as an office, and to designate men by such scriptural titles of office and calling as evangelist, pastor, teacher, bishop, elder, or deacon. There are diversities of ministry within any office, for every man is called to be a steward of his own gifts. At the same time, a general designation of office may be applied to a group of functions within which separate offices could be distinguished.

3. The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church are those given for the ministry of the Word of God, of rule, and of mercy. Those who share in the rule of the church may be called elders (presbyters), bishops, or church governors. Those who minister in mercy and service are called deacons. Those elders who have been endued and called of Christ to labor also in the Word and teaching are called ministers.

It is obvious from the foregoing that each respective office involves time-consuming labors. Not only do the offices each have their special focus for the well-being of the body, but each also has many duties of office that must be diligently executed for the growth, nurture, and spiritual health of all.

The common believer

All believers, all the elect in Christ, are called to serve as a prophet by upholding the word of God and confessing the name of Christ, to also serve¹²⁷ as a priest by being a living sacrifice of gratitude, and to serve as a king who strives with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life.

Throughout the ages the church of Jesus Christ has struggled to understand and teach properly the value and joy of serving as a steward of God's grace. Reference is made here of the work that is common to all believers, outside of the special offices of minister, ruling elder, or deacon.

There is a tendency to downplay or diminish the responsibilities of the common believer, often with tragic consequences. The responsibilities held by the believer in common are most significant. It is a fact that ordinary men and women in the church have been given their five (5) talents. Ask yourself, what evidence do I see of the talents¹²⁸ and gifts¹²⁹ God has given me? How better can I use them to his glory?

All that the Lord gives each of us should be used in the service of God, to bring Him glory, and in the service of our neighbor that we may show him/her the glory of Christ in charity, kindness, and relief where needed. Time, place, and circumstance may obligate a follower of Jesus to invest much time and patience in service of his Lord and master. We will look at some aspects of the time-demand of being a follower of Jesus.

127 <https://www.vancouverapc.org/blog/2018/3/30/what-is-the-general-office-of-believer>

128 **Matthew 25:15** - "To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away."

129 **Ephesians 4:7** - "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."



The common office of the believer

The Lord defines his people (the church) as an assembly or gathering. Many today view the church as a building or as an organization. The Church is the faithful covenant people of God. It consists of all who as adults convert to the faith of the covenant-keeping God, and also those adults who embrace with understanding the faith of covenant-keeping fathers. Infants born into the church are members of the Church under training in great encouragement to follow¹³⁰ Jesus for all of life. Adults are regarded as sons of the Lord¹³¹, and together with their Children are expected to be holy¹³² and in that holiness to obey and follow their Lord.

Mount Zion, the mount of the Lord, was near Jerusalem. Zion is often used to refer to the city of Jerusalem. Zion was the location of the Old Testament temple of the Lord. The term Zion means, marked, distinctive, or differentiated. Zion was known as the place where God dwells¹³³ with His people in a very close Covenant relationship. No false god has ever lived in and among a people. False gods are the fiction of an overly rebellious mind, one that follows the sins of the first Adam.

Deuteronomy 31 instructs the people to gather¹³⁴ so that they may hear, learn, and fear the Lord, and observe to do all the words of His law. The responsibilities of church members are well summarized in the Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 28 as follows:

We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is the gathering of those who are saved and there is no salvation apart from it, no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, regardless of his status or condition.

But all people are obliged to join and unite with it, keeping the unity of the church by submitting to its instruction and discipline, by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and by serving to build up one another, according to the gifts God has given them as members of each other in the same body.

130 **Matthew 19:13-14** - "Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, 14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away."

131 **Deuteronomy 14:1-2** - "“You are the sons of the Lord your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. 2 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”"

132 **1 Peter 1:15-16** - "but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

133 **Hebrews 12:22-24** - " But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."

134 **Deuteronomy 31:11-13** - "when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, 13 and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.""



And to preserve this unity more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to God's Word, to separate themselves from those who do not belong to the church, in order to join this assembly wherever God has established it, even if civil authorities and royal decrees forbid and death and physical punishment result. And so, all who withdraw from the church or do not join it act contrary to God's ordinance.

The marks of the True Church, by which error may be properly identified are found in Belgic Confession, Article 29, and is worthy of close scrutiny, particularly in respect of the distinction of the visible and invisible church. The true church may be seen within the context of the visible church. Within the visible church there is bound to be error. Sometimes this error rises until it is out of hand, other times, by the grace of God, error is corrected and the peace, purity and unity of the church is restored. The maintenance of the harmony of the church requires elders who act in fidelity to the word of God so that their office is not compromised. Such work is time consuming and unending.

True believers who follow Jesus have received full pardon for their sins. They are justified in Christ and yet they are still being sanctified, they are works in progress. Sin still adorns the mortal life of the saints, and the battle to suppress sin and to walk with fidelity continues to the last breath each takes.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 25, says the above the following:

1. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

3. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan.



Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.

6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.

The special offices - the plurality of elders

Among New Testament churches we find substantive mention¹³⁵ that each congregation should have a team¹³⁶ of shepherds¹³⁷. Before proceeding a level-set is in order. The church¹³⁸ is made up of several distinct offices. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd. The body of Christ is his church, the unity of all believers in all time and across all places. The special office of deacon is described¹³⁹ in Acts 6. Deacons are men who hold a distinct and perpetual in the church.

Deacons are called to show forth the compassion of Christ in a manifold ministry of mercy toward the saints and strangers on behalf of the church. To this end they exercise, in the fellowship of the church, a recognized stewardship of care and of gifts for those in need or distress. This service is distinct from that of rule in the church.

The office of elder consists of two distinct categories by which the work of shepherding God's people is distributed so that this work is not concentrated in one man. Ruling elders are called to work with the minister and to assist him in all his labors.

To these two special offices men are called, trained, ordained, and installed as a sacred service to the saints. Men are called to these offices by a local body of believers who share in the body of Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit. Everything knits¹⁴⁰ together in Jesus Christ who holds all authority and power in the church. There is no other source of lawful authority, and there is no other power than that of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

135 **Acts 15:4** “When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.” - Elders - plural

136 **Acts 20:17** “Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.”

137 **Titus 1:5** “... and appoint elders in every town as I directed you ...”

138 **Belgic Confession of Faith**, Article 27: “The Holy Catholic Church”

139 **Acts 6:1-3** – “... a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

140 **Ephesians 4:5-16** - “5 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”



The responsibilities of special officers

Special officers are appointed and charged with various responsibilities that were established by the Lord in the Old Testament administration. The various roles of office were carried forward under the New Testament administration by calling and appointment of representative offices. This is recognized in the OPC BCO, FG Chapter I, Section 3 as:

“Christ orders his church by the rule of his Word; the pattern of officers, ordinances, government, and discipline set forth in Scripture is therefore to be observed as the instruction of the Lord. Church government must conform to the scriptural pattern and follow the specific provisions revealed in the New Testament. In those circumstances not specifically ordered by Scripture the church must observe the general rules of the Word.”

With respect to the power and authority of officers of Christ’s church, the BCO FG III says:

Section 3. All church power is only ministerial and declarative, for the Holy Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. No church judicatory may presume to bind the conscience by making laws on the basis of its own authority; all its decisions should be founded upon the Word of God. “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship” (see also: Confession of Faith, Chapter XX, Section 2; Belgic Confession, Article 30).

Section 4. All church power is wholly moral or spiritual. No church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction; they may not inflict any civil penalties nor may they seek the aid of the civil power in the exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security.

Section 5. Nevertheless, church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction to which Christians are commanded to submit themselves. Therefore the decisions of church officers when properly rendered and if in accord with the Word of God “are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word” (Confession of Faith, Chapter XXXI, Section 2).

Appointment of church officers

The early church had to distill itself around its own characteristics and the unity that all have in Christ. Diversities, age differences, class or social standing, ethnicity, maturity factors, and varying levels of willingness to submit to the Word of God were frequent issues that gave a false testimony¹⁴¹ to the

141 **Acts 15:1-2** “1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” 2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.”



Christ who ransomed¹⁴² his elect from the four winds of the civilized world. It is apparent from the book of Acts¹⁴³ that informal gatherings lacked accountability. Lack of accountability leads to transient participation within the body. The Apostles saw to it that each local gathering elected men to serve¹⁴⁴ as officers as shepherds of God's people.

Attributes of church officers

Church officers are elders, men who have gray hair that ought to signify a sound knowledge of the scriptures and the wisdom needed to communicate¹⁴⁵ and teach the way¹⁴⁶ of Christ. Such men are to lead, not as "overlords" of the congregation, but as servants¹⁴⁷ of God's people.

Believers in the congregation do not owe elders service, that is particularly directed to Christ alone. The Bible clearly says there is "one Lord" and that is Jesus¹⁴⁸. The power that elders have has nothing to do with the men themselves. Elders have only representative authority – that is, they may only legitimately declare to God's people the power that is his alone, in Jesus Christ. Elders have a right to rule and lead because the congregation has seen in them the maturity and character traits they need to follow in a direction¹⁴⁹ that leads to the glory of the Jesus and his church.

142 **Galatians 1:3-4** "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,"

143 **Acts 6:1-7** "1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith."

144 **Ephesians 4:12** - "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,"

145 **1 Timothy 5:17** "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching."

146 **Hebrews 13:7** "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

147 **1 Peter 5:1-3** "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

148 **Ephesians 4:4-7** "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift."

149 **Hebrews 13:17** "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."



Jesus taught that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over¹⁵⁰ them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. He said that whoever desires to become great among his people, let him be your servant – a slave. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for man. This is a leadership style that functions out of service to others. Jesus was our role model. In this model for service, Jesus inverted popular concepts of greatness and authority.

The church officer and his household

The type of rule officers/elders are to demonstrate can be seen by looking at one of the qualifications—the ability to manage¹⁵¹ his own family household. How does a husband, particularly, and a father exercise authority in the home? Not because of a superior position! Not by brute force! He exercises authority and manages well by example in compliance with God’s law, and by lovingly serving his wife and children. The skills of a head of household are learned against a man’s old nature. They require self-discipline, self-control, and great submission to the Lord. It takes time and patience¹⁵² to acquire skills as an able husband and head of house. A great father and husband must well manage time.

A father teaches his son the right moral standards by teaching him God’s word and by modeling those standards. A father can’t do this with the type of authority the world recognizes as normal. He is not separate from his family. Leadership is not synonymous with mere “decision making.” He has to take time with patient perseverance.

A godly father’s qualifications are those of the family “shepherd.” Shepherds work among the flock. They live with them, feed them, protect them, and often sacrificing for them. Elders who know God’s word and have had their skills honed and refined within their families, and through other parts of their lives to persuade others with gentle care love to do what is right before the Lord. Such men also are diligent to seek guidance and direction from God’s word. They take the time needed to acquire skills of office so that when the hour of need falls upon him, his response is a learned and disciplined behavior.

The officers/elders are called by a congregation to lead, teach, protect and love their church members the way shepherds care for the sheep in a sheep. They work hard so that church members will grow to spiritual¹⁵³ maturity. This type of work requires the management of mostly conflicted time. The work of

150 **Matthew 20:25-28** “25 But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.””

151 **1 Timothy 3:4-5** “4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? “

152 **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** - “Every man must patiently bide his time. He must wait -- not in listless idleness but in constant, steady, cheerful endeavors, always willing and fulfilling and accomplishing his task, that when the occasion comes he may be equal to the occasion.”

153 **Ephesians 4:11-13** - “ 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”



shepherding grows as the size of the congregation expands. The time and skills required to quench the flaming darts that disrupt the peace, harmony, and tranquility of the congregation can be vexing.

Relationships within the congregation

The preservation of the peace, harmony, and unity of the people is a prerequisite to usefulness, especially in the Church, where one finds the widest variety of personalities and the greatest diversity of gifts. But no matter how striking and winsome the personality, or how capable one might be in the exercise of gifts, grace is needed. Without the grace of God the congregation will soon wither.

The men who serve in the special offices are overseers of God's people, they are to safeguard the church. They must teach the word of God and must warn of imminent dangers. The Scriptures record the duty of watchmen to safeguard the fields and vineyards¹⁵⁴ during harvest¹⁵⁵ time and were called to announce the start of a new¹⁵⁶ day.

The prophets' job as watchmen was to urge God's people to walk according the Lord's precepts and warn them of the perils involved in falling away from the Lord and doing evil. As watchmen, the prophets were also called to warn wicked people of the judgment and destruction that would come their way unless they turned from their evil ways. The work of the special offices is very much akin to those things and should be done in love and with tender affection to keep a close eye on the walk and welfare¹⁵⁷ of the congregation that has called them.

Teaching and ministering

The ministry of the Word is a special calling of God to stewardship in the gospel. The concept of calling is particularly significant¹⁵⁸ for the minister. The minister, unlike the ruling elder or the deacon, in Reformation churches is an office in which a man serves for his lifetime, and also one in which he ordinarily works to the exclusion income generating interests. This contrasts with the offices of ruling elder and deacon in which office-bearers may offer lifetime service, with or without service breaks. Ruling elders and deacons ordinarily have regular employment outside the church and do not give their full-time attention to the service of the congregation that called them.

154 **Isaiah 5:1-2** - *"Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill."*

155 **Matthew 21:33-34** - *"33 "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. 34 When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit."*

156 **Isaiah 21:11-12** - *"11 The oracle concerning Dumah. One is calling to me from Seir, "Watchman, what time of the night? Watchman, what time of the night?" 12 The watchman says: "Morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; come back again."*

157 **Hebrews 13:17** - *"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."*

158 **Robert L. Dabney**, *"What Is a Call to the Ministry?"* in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological*, v. 2 (1891; repr. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), 26–46.



The OPC BCO, Form of Government, Chapter VI, Section 2, says:

Every minister of the Word, or teaching elder, must manifest his gifts and calling in these various aspects of the ministry of the gospel and seek by full exercise of his ministry the spiritual profit of those with whom he labors. As a minister or servant of Christ it is his duty to feed the flock of God, to be an example to them, to have oversight of them, to bear the glad tidings of salvation to the ignorant and perishing and beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, to exhort and convince the gainsayer by sound doctrine, and to dispense the sacraments instituted by Christ. Among those who minister the Word the Scripture distinguishes the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.

The OPC distinguishes between Ministers and Teaching Elders. By comparison the PCA Form of Government¹⁵⁹ designates all Ministers as Teaching Elders.

The OPC BCO declares the particular responsibilities of the office of a Pastor¹⁶⁰ in its Form of Government, Chapter VIII, as:

Christ's under-shepherd in a local congregation of God's people, who joins with the ruling elders in governing the congregation, is called a pastor. It is his charge to feed and tend the flock as Christ's minister and with the other elders to lead them in all the service of Christ. It is his task to conduct the public worship of God; to pray for and with Christ's flock as the mouth of the people unto God; to feed the flock by the public reading and preaching of the Word of God, according to which he is to teach, convince, reprove, exhort, comfort, and evangelize, expounding and applying the truth of Scripture with ministerial authority, as a diligent workman approved by God; to administer the sacraments; to bless the people from God; to shepherd the flock and minister the Word according to the particular needs of groups, families, and individuals in the congregation, catechizing by teaching plainly the first principles of the oracles of God to the baptized youth and to adults who are yet babes in Christ, visiting in the homes of the people, instructing and counseling individuals, and training them to be faithful servants of Christ; to minister to the poor, the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and to make known the gospel to the lost.

¹⁵⁹ **Morton Smith**, in his *Commentary on the PCA Book of Church Order*, Sixth Edition (Taylors, SC: Presbyterian Press, GPTS, 2007), page 65 notes, “The PCA, after an extensive study of the question of the number of offices, has come to the position that the New Testament teaches that there are two permanent offices in the Church, namely elder and deacon.” Hence the PCA BOCO reflects that, in distinction from the OPC FG, which retains the three-office position from earlier Reformed and Presbyterian polity. Smith continues, “Once the church reached this conclusion [of two offices only], the PCA has re-written the two chapters found in previous forms of the BCO under the titles ‘Of the Ministers of the Word’ and ‘Of the Ruling Elder’ into a single chapter entitled ‘The Elder’.”

¹⁶⁰ **Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America**, Ninth Edition, Ratified AD 2023, I. Ecclesiastical Officers, Article 2: The Duties of the Minister: “The duties belonging to the office of minister of the Word consist of continuing in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, catechizing the youth, and assisting the elders in the shepherding and discipline of the congregation.”



This declaration makes several key points, each of which allude to the importance of exceptionally careful time management. The office of a Pastor, or Minister:

1. Governs the affairs of the congregation he serves in cohort with the ruling elders.
2. A minister has the primary responsibility to conduct and oversee the public worship of the church he serves.
3. A minister has a duty to pray for and with each member of the congregation. The larger the congregation becomes, the more demanding becomes the division of his labors in this capacity.
4. A minister must direct his attention to members of the congregation with particular focus to ensure that each person's needs are met in a timely and appropriate manner.
5. A minister must visit with the people he serves, leading them to the still waters and green grass of the living Word.

Ministers who master the art of time management generally find greater peace of mind than those who constantly struggled to meet what may be seen as the conflicting demands of time, demands that wear and tear at his energies, and may also impose a stress upon his family. Ministers are well advised to collaborate with the ruling elders, seek to effectively conduct the work of ministry and of shepherding the congregation, and to orchestrate the work of reaching into the lives of members of the congregation to serve their needs, point them to Christ, and show them the comfort of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Eldership across the special offices

Ruling elders¹⁶¹ are chosen by the people from among their number. They join with the ministers in the government of the church, and are called ruling elders. The OPC Book of Church order declares the responsibilities^{162,163} of the office of ruling elder¹⁶⁴ as:

3. Ruling elders, individually and jointly with the pastor in the session, are to lead the church in the service of Christ. They are to watch diligently over the people committed to their charge to prevent corruption of doctrine or morals. Evils which they cannot correct by private admonition they should bring to the notice of the session. They should visit the people, especially the sick, instruct the ignorant, comfort the mourning, and nourish and guard the children of the

161 **OPC Book of Church Order**, *Form of Government*, Chapter X, section 1, (2020 edition).

162 **Church Order of the United Reformed Churches in North America**, Ninth Edition, Ratified AD 2023, I.

Ecclesiastical Officers, Article 14: The Duties of Elders: "The duties belonging to the office of elder consist of continuing in prayer and ruling the church of Christ according to the principles taught in Scripture, in order that purity of doctrine and holiness of life may be practiced. They shall see to it that their fellow-elders, the minister(s) and the deacons faithfully discharge their offices. They are to maintain the purity of the Word and Sacraments, assist in catechizing the youth, promote God-centered schooling, visit the members of the congregation according to their needs, engage in family visiting, exercise discipline in the congregation, actively promote the work of evangelism and missions, and ensure that everything is done decently and in good order."

163 **The Constitution of the Reformed Church in the United States**, Article 44: "Elders shall take heed to themselves that they be an example unto others, shall watch faithfully over the spiritual interests of the congregation, shall maintain order in the house of God, shall aid in visiting the sick and in family visitation, and shall contribute according to their ability to the edification and consolation of all members. They shall provide the elements for the Lord's Supper and aid in their distribution, when requested by the pastor or by the Spiritual Council."

164 **OPC Book of Church Order**, *Form of Government*, Chapter X, section 3, (2020 edition).



covenant. They should pray with and for the people. They should have particular concern for the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word and help him in his labors.

The ruling elder among others has the following important responsibilities of office:

1. Lead the church in the service of Christ in complete cohort with the pastor, as part of the body known as “*the Session*” or in some Reformed and Presbyterian churches as: “*the Consistory*” or “*the Church Council.*” - No man has authority to act without consulting with the body that shares all responsibilities of oversight.
2. Watching over the people who are committed to their charge means that there is accountability in the work they do in service of the congregation.
3. The oversight that is exercised by ministers and ruling elders properly involves the spiritual shepherding of the congregation to observe, correct errors of doctrine or morals.
4. Elders bring matters of concern to the Session so that the plurality of elders can work together to bring to bear the greater wisdom of God’s word upon all matters before they become disruptive to the congregations as a whole.
5. All elders (ministers as well as ruling elders) must visit the people in their various circumstances. There they must instruct, comfort, teach the word of God faithfully, and give particular attention to the nurture of the children of the covenant.
6. All elders must pray with and for the people.
7. Ruling elders must oversee the minister of the Word – AND – help him in his labors.
8. What is NOT mentioned explicitly, but is implied of necessity, is that all elders have the responsibility to mentor young men throughout their life, constantly directing their footsteps in the light of God’s word, and prepare those who are so gifted towards service in one of the offices of the church.

From these responsibilities it may be plainly seen that ruling elders exercise extensive duties that demand much time. Elders must manage time carefully balancing each need, at home and in the church, with great skill and dexterity. Men who become overtaxed with the demands of office are naturally inclined to fatigue and disappointment.

Stewardship of the next generation

Reformed and Presbyterian churches practice covenant stewardship, a practice that rightly extends into every aspect of family and congregational life. Young people are being directed¹⁶⁵ through the work of the Holy Spirit to be the visible church of tomorrow.

165 **Trinity Psalter Hymnal**, Psalm 119B: - “How shall the young direct their way? What light shall be their perfect guide? Your Word, O Lord, will safely lead if in its wisdom they confide. Sincerely I have sought you, Lord, O let me not from you depart; to know your will and keep from sin, your Word I cherish in my heart. O blessed Lord, teach me your law, your righteous judgments I declare; your testimonies make me glad, for they are wealth beyond compare. Upon your precepts and your ways my heart will meditate with awe; your Word shall be my chief delight, and I will not forget your law.” - Based on Psalm 119:9-16.



All theology is eschatological. This has a very different meaning within Reformed churches than it does in Arminian¹⁶⁶ churches. We not only look forward to the return of Jesus, but we know also that we are called to work diligently in the Master's vineyard¹⁶⁷ that the fruit will be ready for harvest when the Master returns.

Reformed elders focus their labors on covenantal continuity, both today and to eternity. There is no room within Reformed covenant theology for the concept of a *terminal generation*. However, a church that fails to teach and prepare men to be leaders in the home¹⁶⁸ and in the church is only one generation from its downfall.

The Psalmist reminds us of the need to be proactive in shepherding and directing¹⁶⁹ the lives of our men and women. Young men in particular need nurture, oversight and accountability that they may increasingly become self-aware of the call they have in Christ to take up the mantle¹⁷⁰ of responsibility in the church. The wonderful outcome of diligent nurture of faith and practice within the church can be seen when elders faithfully shepherd those entrusted by the Lord to their charge.

It is a privilege at last to see young men as they develop understanding of God's word, demonstrate fidelity in its application in their walk, and eventually demonstrate the gifted attributes that may mark

166 Arminianism was originally articulated in the Remonstrance (1610), a theological statement signed by 45 ministers and submitted to the Dutch States General. The Synod of Dort (1618–19) was called by the States General to pass upon the Remonstrance. The five points of the Remonstrance asserted that: (1) election (and condemnation on the Day of Judgment) was conditioned by the rational faith (or nonfaith) of each person; (2) the Atonement, while qualitatively adequate for all humans, was efficacious only for the person of faith; (3) unaided by the Holy Spirit, no person is able to respond to God's will; (4) grace is not irresistible; and (5) believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace. The crux of Remonstrant Arminianism lay in the assertion that human dignity requires an unimpaired freedom of the will. (Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arminianism>)

167 **Matthew 20:1-16** - *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ..."*

168 Christian covenant marriage is the building block of the church. Its foundation is Christ. The Scriptures speak often of the centrality of the marriage relationship, the church is presented as the bride of Christ. We do well to recognize how alien this is in the world where postmodernism, post-secular and post-ecclesiastical paradigms rule private and public behavior. The biblical picture of covenant marriage not only denotes its deep spiritual character, but everything it entails provides for liberty for men and women to realize their calling in Christ to preserve relationships, their hearts desires, and the order life's circumstances as servants of the Lord. This concept is entirely contrary to patriarchalism and androcentrism, instead focusing much on permanent relationship of mutual trust, stewardship and love. The preservation of the covenant family is important for the health of society, and especially for the well-being of the church.

169 **Psalm 119:9-16** - *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me wonder from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."*

170 **2 Kings 2:13-15** - *"And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, 'Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?' And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him opposite them, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him and bowed to the ground before him."*



them out as future leaders in Christ's church. Elders do well to nurture young men with specific reference to preparation for roles of responsibility within the church.

Elements of stewardship in the church

All members of Christ's church are responsible to safeguard the integrity of the faith and of the practices within the church. While this applies to all members, it is the specific responsibility of all who hold a special office within the church. These are summarized in the Belgic Confession of Faith, Article 29.

All believers are responsible for the duties of members as part of the body of Christ¹⁷¹- the common believer they must walk as Christ has taught us. The saint must be self-disciplined in the light of Scripture. Only then can the believer respectfully hold the officers of the church to account, just as they must hold themselves to account in obedience to the Head of the Church.

Right doctrine in the church is circumscribed by all of the first table of the Law not just the 4th Commandment. Christ's headship is grounded in the first, second, third, and fourth commandments, where the Triune God alone is to be (1) worshiped, (2) rightly, (3) with reverent use of His names and attributes, (4) at the time and in the manner He has revealed.

The Reformers clearly saw the need to establish safe-guards to protect the purity of the Sacraments Jesus has given to His Church. The Lord has given a most loving and intimate testimony¹⁷² to His elect the rites of Baptism¹⁷³ and of Communion¹⁷⁴ at the Table of the Lord. We must see and preserve the covenant continuity of God's care for His relationship with the redeemed, hence the church must necessarily fence the administration of the sacraments. Fencing means to administer the sacraments with appropriate care and discipline only to those within the visible church.

The culture of the world today disrespects¹⁷⁵ authority. As part of a reaction against authority there is widespread disregard for age and experience, sometimes with an abrupt despising of parents and grandparents. The world idolizes rebellious behavior especially among the young; often this is expected behavior of the young and those that fail to rebel may be seen as not having gained the experience of the real world. Many businesses actively market consumer goods and services to engage the young to counter the ethics and morality of the older generation. Disrespect for authority has dire consequences for society and for church alike. Disrespect may be found at the core of much unrest and conflict, and results in quarrels and disputes. Respectful and civil discussion can achieve reconciliation and resolution and is the best antidote for the restlessness that accompanies contempt for rightful authority.

171 **OPC Book of Church Order**, Form of Government, Chapter III, Article 1.

172 **Westminster Confession of Faith**, Chapter 28, article 1, and Chapter 29, article 1.

173 **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q. 161-167.

174 **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q. 168-177.

175 <https://rts.edu/resources/the-fifth-commandment-honor-parental-authority/>



The elders must guard against inviting into the church the chaos and unrest that rules the world. They must also actively pursue peace-making, and by it to promote a healthy respect for the extensive scope of the 5th Commandment¹⁷⁶ by showing due honor and respect.

The safe-guarding of the church takes much dedication, and of course takes much time and patience. The consequence of failure to perform these tasks and responsibilities can be very significant.

Pious advice

Suggestions for timeliness

In meetings, keep to the topic at hand, contribute where necessary, otherwise keep out of the way. Communicate clearly, precisely, and efficiently. Delegate whenever possible – this is critical in mentoring men so they can eventually replace you! Plan your course to the end. Mentor, mentor, mentor, and show those you are leading where they can find the information and training they need. Plan your obsolescence. The principle trait of an efficient elder is to be needed sparingly, this way you maximize your availability for the really important work that you are required for.

Example – managing particular duties

A church that has a large and distributed membership (for example, several thousand), the duty of elders to visit members clearly requires a larger body of ruling elders. For example; A smaller church of 100 communicant members that equates approximately to 40 families that need to be visited at least once per year would require 40 visits in addition to the *ad hoc* needs that invariably occur. On average there are about 20 weeks per year when families can be reached, thus a Session of 4 elders who visit in pairs will each need to visit 2 families per week in addition to *ad hoc* visits. This is a challenging task for sure! The larger the church membership per elder, the more demanding becomes the management of time so that visitation priorities can be accomplished.

Attending to oversight meetings

The Consistory or Session will typically meet once per month, but more often when the need arises. Unplanned meetings always take longer than a well planned meeting. Ministers and Ruling Elders are must be diligent to attend to the meetings of the leadership of the local church they have been called to serve. This work is a primary call of service and may demand hours of diligent deliberation, searching the scriptures and the confessional standards, planning and faithful application for the growth of the church, the nurture of the saints, and the preservation of the peace, harmony and unity of the congregation. Session meetings may be scheduled (also called *stated* meetings) that take place monthly. Such meetings may take an hour, or may require patient labors extending over many hours. In addition, a Session may need to call special meeting to deal with important or demanding matters that may arise, such as interviewing prospective new members, or dealing with disciplinary matters.

The meetings of Classis or Presbytery are in effect meetings of the Regional Church. The work of such bodies is complex and diverse, therefore much of the work of these bodies will be assigned to temporary or standing committees. If your Regional Church is like most, the work of such committees

176 **Westminster Larger Catechism**, Q. 123-133.



will likely fall to the same few men we manage time and resources well. Be prepared to step in to learn, to contribute as the body will direct, and to lighten the load of the weary old laborers who have done so much heavy lifting before you offered your assistance.

What has been said of the meetings of Classis or Presbytery applies also to the work of the Synod or the General Assembly (GA).

All service in Christ's kingdom takes time – are you ready and able to meet these real constraints upon your time in the Lord's service?

Consequences of not measuring time

A man who rightly measures time has gained the wisdom to recognize that the days and moments God give each person are a gift for which infinite gratitude¹⁷⁷ is needed. A wise man has a right understanding¹⁷⁸ of his relationship to his creator and the duties that are expected of him. Not all men are called to serve in one of the special offices of the church, but all men are called to exercise wisdom¹⁷⁹ and discretion that is set out in the pages of sacred writ.

Men who are exposed to the influences of the world are inclined to grow weary. Nothing detracts more from attention to a self-disciplined God-honoring lifestyle than weariness when soon the rigor of faithful practice is lost for want of taking the time needed to preserve it. A little sleep¹⁸⁰, a little rest, a little self-pity, a few excuses, and self-discipline is gone! It is easy to justify an excess of self-pity when the eye¹⁸¹ lets go of the light.

Israel's neglect

Consider how the Israelites spent 400 years in Egypt and while they were a religious people they had adopted the polytheism of the land. The circumstances and events that involved the golden calf¹⁸² should not surprise us. In dealing with this inexcusable idolatry Moses interceded¹⁸³ to turn away the

177 **Ecclesiastes 2:24-26** - *“There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.”*

178 **Ecclesiastes 1:18** - *“For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”*

179 **Psalms 119:1-3** - *“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!”*

180 **Proverbs 24:33-34** - *“A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.”*

181 **Matthew 6:22-23** - *“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”*

182 **Exodus 32:7-8** - *“And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’””*



wrath of the Lord. Consider also how Aaron answered Moses¹⁸⁴ in this matter when he said: “*You know these people!*” The Lord did not allow sin to go without its reward. Read carefully how being ordained¹⁸⁵ to serve the Lord and to receive the blessings thereof is so very costly! The servants of the Lord must measure time and circumstance ever so faithfully.

The Israelite murmuring at Meribah is worthy of remembrance¹⁸⁶ (compare with Hebrews 3:8-9). The Israelites’ disbelief at Kadesh Barnea resulted in their inability to enter the Promised Land for another generation, and Aaron’s and Moses’ disobedience at Meribah Kadesh kept them from entering the Promised Land as well. Disobedience and unbelief have enduring consequences that can affect the rest of one’s life. Measuring time and giving to the Lord what is His due is so much easier than the neglect thereof. Measuring time comes only out of a heart of wisdom, it comes with hard lessons learned and seldom without consequences.

Every man must run his race all the time with endurance¹⁸⁷. Fidelity in faith and practice is everyone’s responsibility within the household of faith. All men who measure time according to the standard of the revealed word will struggle, but the rewards of fidelity are great and the power¹⁸⁸ to endure is the Lord’s.

The neglect of office

The narrative regarding Eli, the priest, and his sons will help to illuminate the value of measuring time

183 **Exodus 32:11-14** - “But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?’ Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.”

184 **Exodus 32:21-22** - “And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?” And Aaron said, “Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil.””

185 **Exodus 25:29** - “And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’” And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.””

186 **Psalms 95:6-11** - “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.””

187 **Matthew 24:13-14** - “But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

188 **John 14:26-27** - “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”



as one ought. Eli failed to discipline his sons, and then he also refused to restrain them when they mistreated the congregation of Israel. The sacred text says Eli's sons were worthless¹⁸⁹ men because they did not know the Lord. They did evil¹⁹⁰ in the sight of the Lord, and towards God's house. Eli knew, and told his sons¹⁹¹, that "If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" - but it was not enough, The Lord put an end to the house of Eli, so much so that he and his descendants were sentenced to death¹⁹². Neglect of the duties of office has dire consequences – so much that the Lord revoked His promises to Eli's family. This is echoed most profoundly by the prophet Ezekiel¹⁹³ where we read of the Lord's judgment against the shepherds of Israel because of their failure of nurture, protection, and mentorship in the ways of the Lord.

Battle weariness

The book of Revelation chapters 2-3 contain letters that were written to the angel of each of seven churches of Asia Minor in the first century. The angels of the churches referred appear to be the shepherds and watchmen of each church. In other words, they were those who held special office. Each church, or group of worshiping communities, faced many challenges – just like we see in our country today. John's letter of Revelation was destined to be read to each church of Asia Minor.

We must recognize that in our time are many churches are no longer faithful to the word. We should note these comments¹⁹⁴:

In many ways the churches of Asia Minor can be seen, not only as individual churches with specific problems each their own, but more generally as seven churches that testify to the conflicts that all churches face all over the world. In some periods of history the church is characterized by intellectualism, dogmatism, confessionalism; in other periods by emotionalism, revivalism, pietism; in still other periods by practicisim, indifferentism with respect to principles and doctrines. Now the church is cast into the crucible of tribulation and persecution, to be refined by fire; then she enjoys a period of peace and rest.

189 **1 Samuel 2:12** - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord."

190 **1 Samuel 2:22** - "Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance of the tent of meeting."

191 **1 Samuel 2:25** - "If someone sins against a man, God will mediate for him, but if someone sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?"

192 **1 Samuel 2:31-34** - "Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. Then in distress you will look with envious eye on all the prosperity that shall be bestowed on Israel, and there shall not be an old man in your house forever. The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart, and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men. And this that shall come upon your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, shall be the sign to you: both of them shall die on the same day."

193 **Ezekiel 34:1-2, 10** - "The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?" ... "Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them."

194 **Behold He Cometh**, Herman Hoeksema, ISBN 0-916206-65-3 (2000), Page 49.



The social and cultural environment of Asia Minor around the first century was not unlike our own times. Controversy and conflict causes some churches to coalesce around God's Word. The want of measuring time correctly, the failure to exercise wisdom and to recognize the consequences of allowing worldly influences to enter the church almost always leads to the demise of that church.

Ephesus was a great and important city in old-world Asia Minor. It was a dying city at the time, and today its older importance is largely forgotten. Ephesus was a center of trade and commerce, but it was also a city that was a melting pot of false religions and full of idolatry. Ephesus was known for the reprehensible temple of Diana, a symbol of hedonistic¹⁹⁵ lifestyles.

Faithful churches find themselves in the middle of intense spiritual¹⁹⁶ warfare. That the officers of such a church may find themselves at their whits end is hardly unexpected. That's how we find many churches today also. The temptation for compromise for a little temporary relief or tranquility is always present. Super-natural strength and endurance are called for. Men who have the wisdom to measure time need to be constantly reminded that the battle is the Lord's, and only in His strength is the victory won.

St. John speaks of golden lampstands¹⁹⁷ (also a candelabrum, or a menorah). This refers to the seven-branched lampstand that was used in the old Temple and referred to the shining light of the glory of God in Christ. The lampstands represent the perfect and glorified church, she is the true counsel of God, as she shall finally be when He had perfected her, without spot or blemish. The menorah stood in the holy place in the temple at Jerusalem. These lamps symbolize the truth that Israel was the light of God shining in the darkness of the world to the glory of Jehovah, the God who lives in, with, and through His people.

Following Pentecost the true church is the light of God to the world, even as God is light¹⁹⁸ and in Him there is no darkness. Outside of the Light of Christ there is only darkness. The reference to the removal of the lampstand¹⁹⁹ from the midst of the church at Ephesus is particularly serious because when the light is removed only darkness will prevail – it signals the end of the church as the testimony of the risen Christ to the world – her extinction! The call to repentance is urgent. The church of Ephesus must heed it. All churches today also must actively commit to the Word and repent lest error or heresy be

195 <https://www.heritagedaily.com/2020/11/baiae-the-hedonistic-harbour-of-vice/136094>

196 **Ephesians 6:12** - “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

197 **Revelation 1:12-16** - “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

198 **John 1:4-5** - “In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

199 **Revelation 2:5** - “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”



found within its doors. Churches must seek out their weaknesses, daily seeking the full light of the Word so that the full brightness of the Light may continue to radiate and overcome the darkness.

Enduring to the end

The church at Ephesus was charged with having lost the love²⁰⁰ she had at first. This charge is in stark contrast to the report of the commendable witness²⁰¹ she had born. The Holy Spirit alone can equip the church with light and understanding, and thus empower the preaching of the Word. The church must always remember that the Word is the light of the church. Without the pure Word of Christ she can do nothing.

Let us heed from the seven letters to the seven churches that seemingly small errors and small deflections from the truth can have a huge impact on her long-term witness. Over the past few years many Reformed and Presbyterian churches have found difficulty finding men to serve as officers (ministers and/or ruling elders). There is a constantly pressing need that must be filled. Several churches that were known for their doctrinal fidelity have departed from earlier commitments. The lowering of the standards for training for church office (minister and/or elder), the introduction of women as officers, the joining with churches that have a poor track record, are a threat to the continuity of the witness of that body.

The Lord comforts his church with the ministry of His Spirit and a strong²⁰² admonition. This admonition is addressed not only to the seven churches, nor just to the church at Ephesus, but to all churches, to the whole church in all ages present and future until Christ's return on the clouds. Men in the visible church do not all have ears that hear. Departure from the truth is a constant temptation until her glorious perfection is complete.

Measuring time is important to the sustainability of the life of each church. Compromise is never a solution to a temporal problem, but usually is the slippery thin edge of the wedge of decay and falling away. In 1944 the Christian Reformed Church Liberated in the Netherlands (the RCN/GKv) followed Rev. Klaas Schilder in order to preserve fidelity to the scriptures left the Dutch church that had been led by Rev. Abraham Kuyper. In 2013 a minister from the RCN/GKv issued this warning, "*Do not allow the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) to forget J. Gresham Machen like the RCN/GKv has forgotten Schilder!*" From 2016 the OPC sought²⁰³ to call the RCN/GKv back from her errors, but alas to no avail, the OPC, the Canadian Reformed Churches (itself a daughter of the RCN/GKv) have reluctantly severed the bonds of fellowship.

200 **Revelation 2:4** - "*But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.*"

201 **Revelation 2:2-3** - "*I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.*"

202 **Revelation 2:7** - "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.*"

203 https://opcgaminutes.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/89th-GA-Minutes-2023-Digital-Edition-edited-for-opc.org_.pdf (pages 31 and 264).

