



An elder is a locally elected church leader, who works alongside the pastor, to:

- offer spiritual leadership
- share in the oversight of congregational activities
- provide nurture and care for members and visitors

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Ministerial Association
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Developing Church **ELDERS**

3 proficiencies
for leading in an
increasingly complex
environment



1. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Being a faithful leader requires an understanding of the power of leading from a strongly defined sense of vision (Luke 4:16-21). However, as followers of Christ, elders know that real power springs from a spirituality that comes from a personal encounter with Christ (John 15:5). Thus, when the Bible speaks of an elder's qualifications it describes character more than ability or talents (1Tim 3:2-3).

In order to exercise true spiritual leadership an elder needs to make a conscious personal commitment to consistently engage in devotional practices (Mark 9:28-29), and pledge to engage in an ongoing process of learning in order to develop the mindset of a lifelong learner (2 Pet 3:18). Hence an elder's example will help to create a culture of learning in the church.

2. GENERAL OVERSIGHT

The church is to be led in an orderly manner (1 Cor 14:40), which is why the elder's function as an "overseer" (Acts 20:28) is significant. Cooperating with the pastor to have oversight over all the activities and departments of the church will need a good understanding of the organisation and governance principles by which the Seventh-day Adventist church functions. This, among other things, involves learning how to lead a congregation in worship, as well as how to run effective committees and how best to assist the pastor in facilitating a smooth church election process.

The Bible suggests that all elders should be 'able to teach' (1 Tim 3:2), which is principally done through giving Bible studies and preaching. Elders will therefore develop their abilities to study God's Word with others (2 Tim 2:15), as well as acquiring effective public speaking and sermon preparation skills. All with the ultimate purpose of changing lives.

Added to this the elder will develop an appreciation of team building principles and the capacity to recognise the gifts and talents of others (1 Cor 12:1-11).

3. NURTURE

Alongside the pastor, the elder has a shepherding role (1 Pet 5:2) under the direction of the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Effective care will require combining a love for people (John 13:35) with principles of visitation (Acts 5:42). So, the elder will seek to master skills in conflict resolution and practicing confidentiality, as well as ministering to the sick and nurturing new members. The result will be that our church members will be holistically nurtured and kept (Rom 15:1-2).

In obedience to Jesus' Commission (Matt 28:18-20), elders need to understand and implement principles of church growth. This involves learning to actively seek a network of potential disciples in everyday environments and build relationships with them. Thus, through the example of their lives (1 Cor 11:1) elders will seek to build people who are fully devoted disciples with a clear Adventist identity.