

# Elder Examination Preparation Guide

## *QUESTIONS OF DOCTRINE*

Remember, Elders are not elders because they are old; they are elders because they know the Bible well. There is a distinction between those who may be good preachers and those who are Pastors/Elders of a church. But even in their humble beginnings, they knew their Bible well.

Here are Some young Elders who knew their Bible well:

- The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ: 30 years old.
- John the Apostle: ? (His age may range from teens to early 30s??)
- Aurelius Augustine: 37
- John Calvin: 22 (He had his first chaplainry at age 12)
- Christopher Love: 27
- Jonathan Edwards: 15
- Richard Baxter: 23

**Instructions:** These questions are designed to examine your grasp on the broad scope of Christian doctrine, with an emphasis on the Gospel and the doctrine reflected in our confession of faith.

Provide clear, type-written responses to the following. (For readability, please format your responses as follows: double-spaced, 12-point font, Arial or Times New Roman font, one-inch margins.)

Your answers should be written in your own words, including Scripture references when appropriate. Your answer should demonstrate your grasp and understanding of the subject matter and terminology used. Be sure to state what you, personally believe.

We are not looking for seminary-level theology treatises for answers. Some questions can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no;” others with a sentence or paragraph(s). In some instances, we are not necessarily seeking to see if you have agreement with the present elders, but to test your grasp on the subject matter.

## Bibliology: The Doctrine of the Bible

1. What is meant by “general revelation?”
2. What is meant by “special revelation?”
3. How does Scripture refer to Scripture? (What is the Bible’s view of itself?)
4. What is meant by the “verbal, plenary inspiration” of the Scripture?
  - a. Define each of those three words. Verbal means God inspired every word. Plenary means God inspired the entire Bible.
  - b. Do you believe that the entire Bible is inspired in this sense? .
5. What are some objections to the doctrine of verbal inspiration?
6. What is meant by the “inerrancy” of the Bible? Is the Bible “inerrant?”
7. What other divine writings, if any, has God given to man?.
8. In what sense is the Bible authoritative? It is God breathed, and therefore authoritative. God spoke it, and therefore it is binding on my life.
9. How many books are in the Bible? 66 The OT? 39 The NT?. 27
10. What arguments you would use to support that Scripture is God’s Word?
11. What is meant by “illumination?”
12. List the principles that you consider essential for proper Bible interpretation.
13. How would you counsel a person on selection of a Bible translation?

## Theology: The Doctrine of God

14. How do we know that God exists?

*Example answer...*

First of all ***Complexity of Creation*** tells us that God exists.

One must consider the complexity of the ***universe***. Astronomers understand how the stars are arranged in such beautiful order, that even though their is such an immense number, they are perfectly ordered.

The ***earth*** is the perfect distance from the sun. If it were any closer, we would burn up. If we were farther away, the earth would be too cold to sustain life.

Laws must come from a law giver. The order and complexity are amazing. Even the complexity of the human eye, or the human hand points to God's existence. One's existence and the entire created universe is proof that God exists.

The *Whisper of Conscience* also tells us that God exists. There is within all of us and in every culture, universal feelings of right and wrong. Even a thief gets upset and feels wronged when someone steals from him! If someone steals your car or breaks into your house, or robs you or assaults you, there is an anger and revulsion and a rage to confront that act as evil, regardless of the culture.

**Romans 2:13** tells us that all people have God's moral "law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ..." Your conscience tells you not only that there is a God, but you are going to stand before Him in judgment one day. Every time you do wrong, it is an alarm clock for you to get ready to meet God!

In summary, Romans 1 also points to the fact that the transcendental (and universal) laws of logic, conscience and of the universe (laws of science) are all impossible to account for outside of the existence of God. Man may try to suppress these laws that reveal God's power and attributes, but all human beings operate out of a theistic worldview if they acknowledge and operate by these laws.

15. Give a simple definition of the doctrine of "the Trinity."
16. Briefly define and state the significance of each of the following attributes of God:
 

a. Independent	k. Truthful	u. Holy
b. Unchangeable	l. Volitional	v. Peaceful
c. Eternal	m. Free	w. Righteous
d. Omnipresent	n. Omnipotent	x. Jealous
e. Living	o. Sovereign	y. Wrathful
f. Personal	p. Good	z. Perfect
g. Spiritual	q. Loving	aa. Blessed
h. Invisible	r. Merciful	bb. Beautiful
i. Omniscient	s. Gracious	cc. Glorious
j. Wise	t. Patient	
17. What is meant by the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God?
18. Name the incommunicable attributes of God.
19. What is meant by "the providence of God?"
  - a. Over what does God reign providentially?
  - b. Over what does God not reign providentially?

20. How does the sovereignty of God relate to the willing choices of moral creatures?
21. What is a miracle?
  - a. Do miracles still occur?
22. What is prayer?
  - a. How does prayer relate to God's decisions to act?
  - b. To whom should we pray?

## **Christology: The Doctrine of Christ**

23. Who is Jesus Christ?
24. What is meant by the "hypostatic union?"
  - a. Is Jesus fully God?
  - b. Is Jesus fully man?
  - c. At what point, if any, did or will Jesus cease to be human?
25. Was Jesus born of a virgin?
  - a. Was this necessary? If so, why?
26. Did Jesus sin?
  - a. Could Jesus have sinned?
27. Did Jesus physically die? If so, how?
  - a. Why did he die on the cross?
  - b. Was this death absolutely necessary?
  - c. Why is Jesus' blood significant?
  - d. Did Jesus descend into hell?
28. Describe the nature and significance of Jesus' resurrection.
29. What is the significance of Jesus' ascension?
30. What is Jesus presently doing?
31. Define and explain the significance of the three "Offices of Christ."
32. Will Jesus Christ return to earth again? If so, in what way?

## Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Spirit

33. Who is the Holy Spirit? (In your discussion, please include whether the Holy Spirit is a “force” or a “person,” and whether or not the Holy Spirit is divine.)
34. What is the work and ministry of the Spirit to:
  - a. ...unbelievers?
  - b. ...believers at the moment of salvation (regeneration)?
  - c. ...believers after salvation?
35. How does the ministry of the Holy Spirit relate to the ministry of Jesus Christ?
36. Discuss the concepts of “carnal Christians” and “spirit-filled Christians,” as popularly taught. What is your view on such a distinction? How has this doctrine been improperly taught in the churches?
37. The Bible speaks of believers being “indwelt” by the Spirit, “filled” with the Spirit and “baptized” in the Spirit.
  - a. Define the terms. Specifically answer whether these terms refer to the same thing or to different experiences.
  - b. If they are different, does every believer experience them?
  - c. How may a believer experience them?
  - d. Should we seek a “baptism in the Spirit” after conversion? (Consider Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49)
38. What do you believe about the following “spirituals,” sometimes referred to as the “charismatic gifts?” (Please be sure to note your personal belief.)
 

a. Miracles	c. Interpretation	e. Discerning of
Healing	of tongues	spirits
b. Speaking in	d. Prophecy	
tongues		

  - To what extent is agreement on these issues a necessity for local church membership? for teaching in the local church? for elders?
39. What is your understanding of the other “spiritual gifts” listed in Scripture?
40. Compare and contrast the ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament with his ministry in the New Testament?

## Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man

41. Is man the product of age-long evolution or of direct creation by God?
42. Were there a literal “Adam and Eve?”
43. What relation does every man have to Adam? (In what way was Adam a “head” of mankind?)
  - a. In what way is Christ a “new Adam?”
44. What does it mean that man is created in the “image of God?”
45. For what purpose did God create man?
46. What is the significance of God creating man in two genders, male and female?
47. When referring to the make-up of man, what is meant by the terms “trichotomy,” “dichotomy,” and “monism?”

See <http://www.equip.org/perspectives/body-soul-and-spirit> for clarification.

- a. To which do you hold?
  - b. How important is one’s understanding of this issue?
48. What is meant by “free will” (or, free agency)?
  - a. In what way, if any, does man have a free will (or, free agency)?
  - b. To what extent is agreement on this a necessity for local church membership? for teaching in the local church? for elders?

## Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

49. What is sin?
50. What punishment does sin deserve?
51. How did sin enter the world?
52. What is meant by “original sin” (or “original guilt”)?
  - a. What effect did Adam’s sin have on our nature?
  - b. What effect did Adam’s sin have on our guilt?

53. What is the difference between “imputed sin” and “personal sin?” (Define both.)
54. What does the theological term “total depravity” mean?
  - a. Do you believe that man is “totally depraved?”
55. Is everyone born with a sinful nature? (Explain and defend your answer.)
56. What effective efforts can a lost person exert to please God?
57. Describe the sinful nature and its position in the life of the believer.
58. What is the “unpardonable sin?”
  - a. How would you counsel someone who fears they have committed it?
59. Who is the devil?
  - a. Do Satan and demons afflict people today? If so, how can a Christian combat their attacks?
60. Is it possible for a Christian to be demon possessed? Why or why not?

## **Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation**

61. What is the Gospel?
62. How do you understand the relationship between the Law and the Gospel?
63. Do all human beings need salvation? Why or why not?
64. Since the Fall, how many ways of salvation has God provided?
65. How does a sinner gain salvation?
66. Can someone who has never heard of Jesus be saved?
67. Can an unbeliever be saved after death?
68. What must a believer do to maintain his salvation? Explain your view.
69. Is salvation permanent and secure? (Can a person lose his salvation?)

*Give a brief definition for each of the following theological terms. State what you personally believe about them. (If clarifying questions are included, answer those in addition to the definition.)*

70. Grace
- a. What is “common grace?”
  - b. What is “saving grace?”
  - c. Will any man be saved apart from grace?
71. Redemption
- a. To whom did Christ pay a ransom?
72. Atonement
- a. Was the atonement necessary?
  - b. What was Christ’s “active obedience?”
  - c. What was Christ’s “passive obedience?”
  - d. What is meant by “penal substitution” when referring to the atonement?
    - Do you agree with this view of the atonement?
  - e. For whose sin did Christ atone?
  - f. Can a person whose sin is atoned for go to hell? Why or why not?
  - g. What is meant by “limited atonement?”
  - h. What is meant by “unlimited atonement?”
  - i. Which do you hold to?
    - How important is agreement on the limited/unlimited issue among church members? among teachers in the church? among elders?
73. Propitiation
74. Reconciliation
75. Election
- a. Who are “the elect of God?”
  - b. Is it possible for the elect to go to hell?
  - c. On what basis does God elect his people?
  - d. What is meant by the term “unconditional election?”
    - Do you believe in this?
    - How important is agreement on the doctrine of election among church members? among teachers in the church? among elders?
76. Calling
- a. What is the difference between a “general call” and an “effectual call?” Define each.

- b. To whom should the Gospel be preached?
  - c. What is meant by “irresistible grace?”
  - d. Do you agree with this teaching?
77. Regeneration
- a. How is regeneration accomplished?
  - b. What results from regeneration?
  - c. How does regeneration relate to repentance and faith?
78. Conversion
- a. What is faith?
  - b. What is repentance?
79. Justification
- a. By what means does God justify?
  - b. Does justification come before or after faith?
80. Union with Christ
81. Adoption
82. Sanctification
- a. Positional Sanctification
  - b. Progressive Sanctification
83. Perseverance
- a. What is meant by the term “the perseverance of the saints?”
  - b. Can a true Christian lose his salvation?
84. Glorification

## **Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church**

85. Define the following terms:
- a. The invisible church
  - b. The visible church
  - c. The universal church
  - d. The local church
86. What is the relationship between Israel and the church?
- a. What is Dispensationalism? Give a brief history.
  - b. What is covenant theology?
  - c. What is New Covenant theology?
  - d. What do you believe about each of the above?
  - e. What are their strengths and weaknesses of the above systems?
  - f. Do you describe yourself as subscribing to any of these?

- g. What degree of unity on this issue is required for local church membership? for teaching in the church? for elders?
87. Explain the significance of the following imagery used of the church:
    - a. The body of Christ
    - b. The bride of Christ
    - c. A holy priesthood
    - d. A new temple (spiritual house)
    - e. The household of God
  88. What is the purpose and function of the local church? (What are the main things that a local church should be doing?)
  89. What are the marks of a true church?
  90. What are the marks of a truly regenerated person? (Try to use the book of 1 John as your basis).
  91. Do all the promises to Abraham belong to us? (See Gal. 3)
  92. What form of local church government is biblical?
  93. What is congregationalism?
  94. Define the office of elder.
    - a. What is the role of an elder?
    - b. Who may serve as an elder? May a woman?
    - c. What, if any, is the difference between a “ruling elder” and a “teaching elder?”
    - d. What, if any, is the difference between a pastor, an elder and an overseer?
    - e. Must an elder be married?
    - f. Must an elder have children?
    - g. Must an elder’s children be believers?
  95. Define the office of deacon.
    - a. What is the role of a deacon?
    - b. Who may serve as a deacon? May a woman?
  96. What ordinances should a local church practice?
  97. What is baptism?
    - a. Who is eligible to receive baptism?
    - b. Who should administer baptism?
    - c. What modes are acceptable for baptism?

- d. Would you allow person baptized by a different mode to become a church member?
98. What is the Lord's Supper?
- a. Who should administer the Lord's Supper?
  - b. Who should receive the Lord's Supper?
  - c. How would you counsel...
    - ...a parent whose child wishes to receive the Lord's Supper?
    - ...an unbaptized person, inquiring about the Lord's Supper?
    - ...non-church-member, inquiring about the Lord's Supper?
  - d. What elements may be used in the Lord's Supper?
99. Describe your understanding of local church membership?
- a. Is church membership biblical?
  - b. What are the obligations of church membership?
  - c. How would you answer a person who refuses church membership on the grounds that it is not found in the Bible?
100. What conditions do you believe should be required for local church membership?
101. What role does church membership play in salvation?
102. What is church discipline, and how should it be practiced?
103. How should spiritual gifts be used within the local church?
104. Who is responsible for ministry in the local church?
105. How should a church relate to its culture?

## **Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things**

106. Where are unbelievers who have died?
107. Where are believers who have died?
108. What is your concept of heaven?
109. What is your concept of hell/Hades/"the lake of fire?" Defend it from the Bible.
110. Define "annihilationism." Is it taught in the Bible?
111. Describe what you believe about the Second Coming of Christ to earth.

112. Define the following terms:
- a. Preterist
  - b. Futurist
  - c. The Great Tribulation
  - d. Rapture
  - e. Millennium
  - f. Amillennialism
  - g. Dispensational Premillennialism
  - h. Historical Premillennialism
  - i. Postmillennialism
- Which, if any, do you believe in?
  - What degree of understanding and unity on these issues is required for local church membership? for teaching in the church? for elders?
113. What are some difficulties with the Premillennial view?
114. What are some difficulties with the Amillennial view?
115. What do you believe about “the Kingdom?”
- a. What is the Kingdom of God?
  - b. In what sense has the Kingdom come, if it has at all?
  - c. In what sense are we waiting for the Kingdom to come, if at all?
116. Who will be physically resurrected? When?
117. Who will be judged? When?
118. What is your concept of the New Heavens and New Earth?

## **Hermeneutics – the Interpretation of the Bible**

119. Discuss various rules of interpretation. Why are they important?
- a. The Bible is the best commentary on the Bible.
  - b. Always interpret the Bible in its context.
  - c. Interpret the Bible plainly.
  - d. The clear interprets the unclear.
  - e. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament
  - f. Christ is the central focus of both Testaments. Explain how this is and use Scripture to prove your points.
120. What do we mean by analogy of faith?

121. What is meant by the grammatico-historical method of interpretation?
122. What are types and shadows? Explain.
123. What does it mean to interpret the Bible in its historic-redemptive context?
124. We are to interpret the Bible plainly. What does that mean and how is this different from a literal interpretation?
125. Discuss the extremes of Arminian theology vs. Hyper-Calvinism. What does a balanced reformed soteriology look like? How would it affect your interpretation of the Bible?

## **The Christian Life**

126. What is the focus of God's work in the life of a believer?
127. When a Christian sins, how does he regain fellowship with the Lord?
128. How does a believer grow spiritually?
129. What is nouthetic counseling? Give a defense for it.
130. What two doctrines would you first teach a new Christian? Why?
131. How would you teach a new believer to study the Bible personally?
132. How would you teach a new believer to pray?
133. For what will a believer be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ?
134. How would you comfort a fellow believer during a time of suffering in his life?

## **Biblical Theology: Redemptive History**

135. Give a general outline of redemptive history as it unfolds in the Bible (noting both the Old and New Testaments).
136. What is the difference between "systematic theology" and "biblical theology" and "historical theology".
  - a. What is the importance of each in preaching?
  - b. What is the importance of each in counseling?

## **Errant Theology: Heresies, Errors, and Cults**

Define and discuss the following:

137. Gnosticism
138. Modalism
139. Arianism
140. Antinomianism
  - a. How does the popular teaching of the carnal Christian doctrine relate to antinomianism?
141. Open Theism
142. The Church of Christ and the “Campbellites”
143. Jehovah’s Witnesses (Arianism)
144. Mormonism
145. The Prosperity Gospel (Health and Wealth Gospel)
146. Charismatic Movement (Benny Hinn, etc.)

## **Doctrinal Development: Church History**

*Discuss briefly the significance of each of the following, naming a key figure involved in each:*

147. Discuss the formulation of the canon of Scripture.
148. The Council of Nicea
149. The Council of Chalcedon
150. The Reformation
151. Council of Trent
152. What was the purpose and outcome of the Council of Dordt?

153. The 1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening
154. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening
155. Discuss the following figures in church history, and their importance, whether good or bad.
  - a. Arius and Athanasius
  - b. Aurelius Augustine
  - c. Thomas Aquinas
  - d. John Wycliffe
  - e. William Tyndale
  - f. Martin Luther
  - g. Desiderius Erasmus
  - h. John Calvin
  - i. John Bunyan
  - j. John Wesley
  - k. Jonathan Edwards

## **Practical Theology**

156. How would you present the Gospel to a lost person?
157. How would you tell a parent to point a child to Christ?
158. Discuss your testimony of salvation.
159. Discuss why you believe God is calling you to be an elder and overseer of His church.