

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

for if someone does not know how to manage his own household,

how will he care for God's church?

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit

and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

ELDER TRACK

SEVEN MILE ROAD CHURCH

Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders

so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Elder Track

Seven Mile Road Church

the track

The **Elder Track** is designed to evaluate the character, call, and competency of men who sense that God may be calling them to pastoral ministry at or through Seven Mile Road Church. Pastoring Jesus' church is a weighty and serious call. Therefore, the men who aspire to be planters/pastors do well to spend a season of their lives exploring this call together. Running in this track will mean being a part of a tight, gospel-centered, band of brothers, who are being shaped by the Word, and are ready to love, instruct, encourage, and correct each other.

God may be calling you to be an elder. God may not be. In order to get the most of this track, let go of any desire of a position or title and set your sights on being the best and most godly spiritual leader you can be. Be honest. Be humble. Be prayerful. Seek to become a better man and trust God with His calling on your life.

It is an honor to share this journey with you. May our homes, our church, our city, and our world be blessed through this season together.

taking the first steps

Here are some questions to answer before stepping into the Track. Submit your written answers to Ajay by **Monday, December 12, 2011**.

1. Articulate your sense of God's calling on your life to pastoral ministry.
2. Why do you aspire to be a pastor at Seven Mile Road Church specifically?
3. What does your wife feel about your call?
4. What doubts or concerns do you have about your own readiness for eldership?
5. Is there anything in your life (work, school, finances, health, family, unrepentant sin, etc) that would keep you from full and healthy participation in the Track?
6. If, at this time, you are not appointed to be an elder, how would you respond?
7. What are your hopes for this season together?

the terrain

Assessing and developing character

A potential pastor must be a man of the highest Christian character ('above reproach') if he is to serve as an undershepherd to Jesus. The eternal significance of Jesus' church and its mission demand nothing less. Christ obtained His flock with His own blood and so they must be cared for well. Therefore, our Track will strongly emphasize Gospel-centered character assessment and development. It's the kind of deep, soul-level work that enables us to identify and work through any sinfulness that would potentially shipwreck a pastor and harm the church or its mission. Confession, accountability, and soulcare are therefore an integral part of our time together.

Fostering a holy affection for Jesus' people

Pastoring is not a job, but a calling that demands the full engagement of the planter/pastor's soul. It is a call to, like Jesus before us, give our lives for the saints. Without such selfless, sacrificial love for the sheep, a man is unqualified to serve as their shepherd. So our Track will strongly emphasize the development of an affectionate love for the people we are called to give our lives for.

Instilling sound pastoral theology

To lead Jesus' church well necessitates having a mature grasp of Jesus' gospel and Jesus' truth. If a man is going to proclaim, admonish, teach, evangelize and lead well, he must know the gospel and be sound theologically. If he is going to guard the church from false doctrine, he must know right doctrine. While participation in the Track assumes a certain level of previous theological training, the Track will emphasize theology with an eye towards pastoral leadership in the church. Our hope here is for each man to emerge from the Track with a strong foundation of what Scripture calls pastors to and how Scripture shapes that work.

Sharing hands-on pastoral ministry

Planting/pastoring a gospel-centered, missional church is a difficult, frustrating, exhausting and at the same time rewarding, spiritual work. It requires humility, diligence, creativity, and a certain level of stubborn resiliency. The Scriptures liken the work of a pastor to an ox plowing a field. Head down. Step after step. Carrying a load. With the hope that one day, you get to look behind you and see a glorious harvest. This is the work of a pastor. Since there is no substitute for getting your hands dirty in the trenches, our Track provides the opportunity for a potential planter/pastor to experience the grass roots nature of pastoral ministry in the context of a real live church plant.

Elder Track

Seven Mile Road Church

the runners

The Elder Track is for men who are members in good standing at Seven Mile Road who sense a call to eldership and are recommended to the church by the current elders. These men need to have a proven track record in the life of Seven Mile Road of love for Jesus, service, reliability, humility, love for the church, etc. They must also possess a basic understanding of systematic/Biblical theology and Reformed doctrine. For such men, here are the requirements if you are going to run with us.

Transparency

We will share our stories, sins, hopes, dreams, all of it, freely. We will not hesitate to be honest with our struggles, behaviors, doubts and questions. We are inviting each other into our lives intimately, *as we really are*. We're seeking for Jesus to do a work on the real us (not the good pretend version that doesn't exist).

Confidentiality

Because of the above, we are promising strict confidentiality to each other with all information shared in the context of the Track. We are Christian men, and being in the Track means being *for* each other. That trust cannot be broken.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Unless something major comes up, everyone is expected to attend every meeting. The schedule for the Track is given in advance so we can plan to be there.

Preparation

The Track will require reading, reflection, prayer, and preparation. Can you wing it? Sure. Will we know? Absolutely. Don't sell yourself or your brothers short. If we don't participate in this season with integrity, what are we doing this for? So each of us are expected to have worked through any readings and/or other preparation material that is assigned. Since soulcare will be embedded in each session, each of us are also expected to come prepared to walk through the previous month with clarity and focus.

Prayer

We each promise to be regular in our prayer for the other brothers throughout the Track.

Elder Track

Seven Mile Road Church

the pace

Participation in 3 'Overnights'

There is nothing like getting away from the busyness of our lives for some dedicated time of prayer, Scripture, conversation, and reflection. These overnights are designed to give us an environment with ample time to engage in some of the deeper conversations necessary in this process.

Participation in 9 monthly Sunday night gatherings

We will gather monthly to participate in two distinct exercises together:

- The first is *soulcare*. Each night begins with a time of conversation and confession of the last month's fight and following of Christ.
- The second is *pastoral-theological conversation*. Each night we'll have a topic to work through. Reading and questions to consider will be assigned before hand. We will be working towards developing a strong pastoral theology.

Topics will include from the following:

Biblical Eldership	Time Management
Prayer	Finances
Word/Preaching	Husband & Father
Sexual Purity	Leadership

Weekly/daily participation in the life/mission of the church

This will include specific pastoral/missional ministry of some sort (leading a SoulCare community, music, administration, preaching, etc), as well as observation of/participation in the general oversight of the life of the church. This in-the-trenches-work is where gifting is surfaced and where you experience real work of gospel-centered, missional church planting.

Tentative Schedule

- Overnight 1: January 30-February 2, 2012 (*Orlando, Acts 29 Conference*)
- First Sundays from 6-9pm: Mar 4, Apr 1, May 6, Jun 3
- Overnight 2: July 6-7, 2012 (*TBD*)
- First Sundays from 6-9pm: Aug 5, Sept 2, Oct 7, Nov 4, Dec 2
- Overnight 3: January 4-5, 2013 (*TBD*)