

Expectations and Accountability for Evanston Vineyard Leaders

Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. *(1 Timothy 3:2-4, NIV)*

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. *(Luke 12:48b, NIV)*

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. *(1 Timothy 5:19-22, NIV)*

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. *(1 Timothy 4:12, NIV)*

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. *(James 3:1, NIV)*

These passages present some of the basic New Testament teachings regarding what are the Biblical expectations for those in church leadership. God has always been generous to us at Vineyard Evanston by giving us a continual supply of gifted leaders:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up *(Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV)*

God gifts His church with leaders, it is the church's responsibility to recognize the leaders God has given, then train, oversee and provide accountability for them. In addition to volunteering their time, all of our leaders are required to be members of the church, fulfilling their membership commitment by being regular attenders of Sunday worship and a small group and by giving financially in a regular and generous manner. It is a great honor to be called to be a leader of God's flock as well as a great responsibility. As the above passages indicate, church leaders are called to live exemplary lives (though not perfect). They are to be held to a higher standard than those who do not hold leadership positions in the church. Faithful shepherds can also look forward to receiving the special honor of a "shepherd's crown" when Jesus returns: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." *(1 Peter 5:4, NIV)*

Almost everyone we call a Leader at Vineyard Evanston is a pastor in some capacity: Paid Pastoral staff, Congregational leaders (pastors of leaders), Ministry leaders (pastors of volunteer workers), Small group pastors, Youth Workers (pastors of teens), Children's workers (pastors of children), Pre-marital counselors (pastors of couples preparing for marriage), Worship leaders (pastors of band and choir members)

To support our leaders as they carry the burdens of ministry and as they try to live exemplary lives, we encourage all our leaders to participate in honest, self-disclosing accountability relationships where they can talk and address potential areas of personal weakness. This is what John calls "living in the light" *(1 John 1:7)*. We assume that all of us will face temptation at our points of weakness, just as Jesus was.

We are all "in process" as we grow to become more like Jesus. Most of our sins and weaknesses can be monitored and, with care, we can function in leadership while we are still maturing. Sometimes, however, leaders do fall into sin that is serious enough and disqualifies them from continuing in leadership. When this happens we must step down from ministry until our sin and underlying issues are successfully addressed before we can be restored to public ministry.

In obedience to Paul's admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:20-21, it is our policy to publicly rebuke serious sin in a church-wide leader "so that the others may take warning" (Serious sin is that which would bring reproach upon the individual or the church, such as sexual misconduct, financial misconduct, alcohol or substance abuse, etc.) For example, in an instance where one of our staff pastors, regular Sunday worship leaders or missionaries were to fall into a serious sin, they would need to publicly confess their sin to the members of the church, step down from ministry and participate in an individualized restoration process. Again, this is because of Paul's insistence on the public impact when the correction is made known to others: "so they may take warning." If a church-wide leader falls into sin, the Church Council participates in addressing the situation and formulating the public response and the personal restoration process. The extent and nature of the discipline is dependent upon both the seriousness of the sin and level of responsibility that the leader has.

Our church has successfully rehabilitated a number of fallen leaders who have undergone a restoration process after having disqualified themselves from leadership. Restoration generally involves personal counseling & ministry that gets at the root of the disqualifying sin, followed by a period of consistent victory in the previous area of weakness.

For other leaders who fall into serious sin, the sphere of accountability (where public confession takes place) is the same as their public sphere of responsibility. The Pastoral Staff oversee the disciplinary and restoration process for other leaders. For example, if a youth leader falls into sin, the general nature of their sin (not all the specific details) is reported to the other youth leaders, to the parents of the youth and to the youth themselves. The leader who falls has the option of personally informing those people in their sphere of responsibility or they can have the leader of the particular ministry inform those people. The same would be true if a small group pastor falls into sin: the other small group pastors in that congregation would be informed of the reason the leader is stepping down as well as the members of the small group.

In addition to the understandings stated in this "Expectations and Accountability for Vineyard Evanston Leaders" which is applicable to all Vineyard Leaders, some Vineyard Leaders are required to follow additional agreements:

1. All Staff Pastors have agreed to scrupulously follow a written agreement entitled "Expectations on Appropriate Behaviors in Relationships with the Opposite Sex."
2. All Sunday morning musicians sign an Expectations Agreement prior to joining their public "on-stage" ministry.
3. Youth Workers and Children's Workers sign an agreement that enumerates special expectations governing their ministry.
4. All church employees have signed the Vineyard Evanston Harassment Policy and Grievance Procedure policy.

As a Vineyard Evanston Leader, I have read and agree to follow the Expectations and Accountability Agreement as described above.

Name

Date