**STUDY GUIDE FOR CHURCH ELDER/WLB EXAMINATION**

The following questions are intended for use by Elder and Women Leader Board candidates as either a study guide in preparation for an extensive oral exam or as a written exam together with a brief follow-up oral exam. The content of the exam is derived from the PCA confessional concensus concerning what the scriptures principally teach per the [Westminister Confession of Faith](http://www.opc.org/wcf.html) (“WCF”, c.f. Larger and Shorter Catechism) and [PCA Book of Church Order,](http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2015BCO-Reprint-with-bookmarks.pdf) (“BCO”). Toward a better understanding and application of the teachings contained in the above two sources, the exam will also focus on the disussion questons and answers contained in the CPC Handouts in its class on [Confessional Theology](http://cpcnewhaven.org/confessional-theology) and [Shepherd Leader Training](http://cpcnewhaven.org/shep).

The study guide/exam is divided into two parts—Theology and Ecclesiology —both of which pertain to the doctrines of God and Salvation. The topics contained in each are arranged following the order of the Confessional Theology Class and Shepherd Leader Class respectively.

Doctrines in Theology

Confessionalism and the Use of Creeds:

1. What are some common objections to the Use of Creeds and how would you respond?
2. What does it mean to be a "confessing" church? What are some of the advantages?
3. How might confessionalism deminish the authority of scripture? How does it support and better execute the authority of scripture?

1. What are the two Constitutional Standards of the Presbyterian Church in America" How do they differ relative to our relation to them (note different vows related to each in elder ordination vows). How do both relate to the Holy Scriptures?
2. Concerning the relation of holy scripture to confessions of faith,and confessions of faith to books of church order, it could be said that true Christian orthdoxy is *adherence to biblically well established principles, not adherence to old measures.* How then would this impact the way we use the Book of Church Order and Westminister Confession of Faith respectively. (note the relation of “measures” to “established principles” to “biblically well established” respectively).
3. What is the origin of the WCF?

Revelation: (WCF 1,c.f. Handout)

1. What is Divine revelation and what is its ultimate purpose?
2. What are the two types of revelations? How do they corresond to two types of “grace.”
3. In what way(s) are the two types of of relvelation similar?
4. In what ways do they differ? Specifically, how do they different with respect to:
   1. Their respective focus on God?
   2. Their respective focus on God’s activity?
   3. Their respective relevance to salvation?
   4. Their respective recepiants?
   5. Their respective uses?
5. What is the signifiance of the limted use of general relvelation relative to Christian evangelism/apologetics?

Doctrine of Scripture:(WCF 1b)

1. What is the biblical doctrine of biblical "inspiration?” Especially, what exactly IS inspired and how?

1. What are two false views of inspiration and their implications for how we interpret the Bible?
2. What is the over-arching topic (meta-narrative) of the Bible and how does this inform the way in which the Bible interpreted? (e.g.What is the "infallible rule of interpretation" and its relation to having a “covenantal” or “redem;ptive historical approach to reading the Bible?
3. What is the bibical role of the Holy Spirit in WhaBible Interpretation? Contrast with what it is not.
4. What is the biblical role of the Church in Bible interpretation? Contrast with what it is not?
5. How would we contrast “illumination” from “revelation and how does this relate to the issues of continuingrevelation vs. cessation?

Doctrine of God and the Holy Trinity (WCF 2)

1. What are some “incommunicable” attributes of God as pertaining to the nature or “being” of God?
2. What are some “communicable” attributes of God as pertaining to the person or “character” of God?
3. In the spirit of being consistent, what are some implications of each regarding other Christian doctrines? For instance, the relevance of God’s “being” related to the issue of divine soverignty? The relevance of God’s character as relatd to morality?
4. What is the true Christian doctrine of Trinity in contrast with at least two false views of the Christian doctrien of the Trinity?
5. Was Christ both “God and human” before his incarnation on earth, and is he now ascended as both God and human? Why is this important relative to our savation?
6. How are each persons of the Trinity related to salvation? (c.f. Eph 1:3ff)

Doctrine of God’s Decrees and Providence (WCF 3, 5)

1. What is a decree of God? (What, by contrast are some ways that the sovereinty of God’s descrees can be dimished
2. What does a decree of God impact?
3. What attributes concerning the nature and person of God directly determine God’s absolute soveriegnty?
4. What are at least common objections to this doctrine and what is a biblial response?
5. Why is the doctrine of God’s sovereign decree not “fatalistic” but rather “good news” in terms of evangelism? (c.f. Whitfield vs. Wesley in handout for instance)
6. What is meant by “secondary causes” relative to the decree of God and why is this important concerning human freedom of the will? E.g. In what sense is God “free” and in what sense we“free” with respect to the will?
7. Why is human freedom of the will important? Is there an “innocent” person in the world relative to moral culpabilituy?
8. Why pray if God is soverign?

Doctrine of Creation (WCF 4)

1. What exactly did God create?
2. What is the ultimate purpose of Creation as told in Genesis? How would this impact the way we read Genesis in terms of the modern debate regarding faith and science?

1. What are the necessary implications that God created the world out of nothing (fiat creation)? What could be some false implications relative to modern controversies in faith and science? E.g In what form could evolution be explained such as to be consistent with the Christian doctrine of Creation? In what sense would evolution be explained such as to be inconsistent with Christian doctrine of creation?
2. What is the biblical assessment of what God created and how should that direct the way we participate in creation?

Doctrine of Divine Providence (WCF 5)

1. What is Divine Providence?
2. How does divine providence relate to divine creation now? Is Divine providende a supernatural miracle? (explain either way)
3. How does the doctrine of providence related to Christian contentment?
4. How does the doctrine of providence change the way we relate to suffering?

Doctrine of Humanity and the Fall into Sinl (WCF 4, 6)

1. What does it mean that humanity was made in the image of God?
2. How does this related to the issue of racism? Sexism? Etc.
3. What three redemptive “offices are given to humanity in relation to imaging God as reflected in their creation vocation?
4. Was humanity created “innocent” or “perfect?” What is the difference by way of implication?
5. What is the origional sin and how does this relate to “actual” sins? (note: “all actual transgressions” proceed from “this original corruption”)
6. What is the result of original sin in relation to God?
7. What is the conseqence concerning the human condition? What implicaiton as to what must happen to humanity in order for us to be saved? (c.f. Finney vs. Edwards)
8. What as the result of original sin in relation to God? What is Hell?
9. What does the doctrine of “total depravity” mean? What doesn’t it mean?

God’s Covenant and Christ as Mediator (WCF 8, 19)

1. What is a covenant? (generally speaking)
2. Would you distinguish between a covenant of works and a covenant of grace in redemptive history?
3. How would it be true to say that we are saved by "works?" How would it be false?
4. What is meant by the "old" covenant and the "new" covenant in Scripture? In what way could the "old" covenant be described as a temporal covenant?
5. How does Christ's work relate to the covenant? Can we then say that by faith in Christ, we are saved by works of the law?
6. Why is Christ the perfect mediator between God and people?
7. Is Christ a sectarian Lord and universally Lord? What about his person and Work make it so?
8. What is the difference between the "passive" and "active" work of Christ? E.g. in what two ways was Christ “ made under the law?”
9. What offices does Christ execute as our redeemer? How does each office function for our salvation? How are they related to the visible church?
10. Distinguish the ministry of Christ during his ascension vs. Christ’s incarnation? (c.f. Eph 1:3-13 and 14ff respectively)

Justification and Adoption (WCF 11, 12)

1. What did the Cross Achieve? (Distinguish between three other views?) eg what is the object or "termination" of Christ's work on the Cross?
2. What does "imputation" have to do with "justification?" Why is it important to distinguish “imputation” from “infusion” of righteousness as related to the doctrine of justification?
3. Is "justification" the same as "pardon?" Why/Why not?
4. What are some of the benefits of the doctrine of adoption?
5. In what way is justification and sanctification the same? How are they distinguished?
6. How is a person justied of their sins?

Salvation Applied and The Doctrine of Effectual Calling, Repentance and Faith (WCF 10, 14, 15)

1. What is meant by the "order of salvation?" In what sense is it an "order?"
2. What is effectual calling and how does God accomplish it?
3. What is regeneration?
4. What difference does the "order of salvation" make? Why, for instance, would it matter that effectual calling is understood to "precede" regeneration? How would this effect our view of salvation?
5. What is first, regeneration or repentance and faith? Why does it matter as related to Christian Assurance??
6. How does effectual calling relate to Christian Baptism (c.f. Act 2)?
7. What are the three characteristics of “saving faith?
8. What are the three ordinary means by which God gives us saving faith?
9. What is repenetance unto life? And especially, how is “repentance” distinguished from “good works”? e.g how is repentance related to our origional sin especially?

Assurance and Perseverance: (WCF 17,18)

1. What is Christian assurance?
2. How does a person have "assurance?" Do we examine our works to gain Christian assurance? E.g. What makes assurance “infallible? (c.f. saving faith”)
3. Can it increase or decrease over time?
4. What is the difference between "assurance" and "perseverance?" How is one related to the other?

e.g. What are the consequences of saints falling into sin? What, if anything, do they (the elect) "lose?"

1. Does perseverance depend on Christians or on God?
2. Can a person "lose salvation?" How does the above two doctrines help answer the question?"
3. Do persevering saints ever fall into grievous sins, or continue in them, for a time?
4. How does Assurance and Perseverance relate to the meaning and purpose of the Lord’s Supper?

Sanctification and Good Works (WCF 13, 16)

1. What is sanctification?
2. What does the "affections" have to do with sanctification?How would you describe the relation of "affections" with the "heart" and "mind" in sanctification?
3. What are the positive and negative dimension to sanctification?
4. Is sanctification perfected in this life?
5. In what ways can we say that sanctification is liberatng?

Death, Heaven and Hell (WCF 32,33)

1. What happens to Christian believers with respect to their spirit and body when they die?
2. Notice the language of “self-same” in the confession’s description of the resurrected body? How then does this impact the way we think about the material world and material pleasures even?
3. When are earthly pleasures a sin?
4. What happens to those who die apart from faith in Christ?
5. How is Hell distingished from annialation?
6. What makes Hell a suffering reality?
7. What impact ought the relatity of heaven and hell have on life now?
8. Can we know when Christ will return to earth with the heavenly kingdom? What will characterize the “last days? When are the “last days” according to scripture?
9. What will be characteristic of the last days?

Doctrine of Church ahd Polity

The Doctrine of the Church an Relation to the Communion of Saints (WCF 25, 26, BCO Preface)

1. How is the church related to Christ? (c.f. WCF 25.1 note two descriptions)
2. What are the implications that the Church is a covenant community “by positive divine institution” as related to Christ as “head?” (c.f. Confessional Theology Study Guide and Shepherd Leader Training Study Guide)
3. What are the implications that the church is the holy temple of God as related to Christ’s real, if spiritually mediated, presence who fills all in all? (c.f. Confessional Theology Study Guide and Shepherd Leader Training Study Guide)
4. Chapter 26.1 expands upon the relation of Christ and church. (e.g. c.f “by…” ) Accordingly, what, by nature, does “communion of the saints” mean? (E.g .what is the source of our holy communion and how is this communion accomplished and experienced?)

1. Can we have the fullness of Christ apart from participation in the body of Christ on earth? Explain. (note WCF 26.2, Eph 1:18ff, Eph 2:18ff)
2. Given the relation of the church to Christ by the Holy Spirit, is the church an essential element of the gospel? (c.f. WCF 25.2) In what sense? Qualification?
3. What exactly is the distinction between the invisible and visible church? (How are they the same and how are they different) What is a common false distinction?
4. What are the “means” through which Christ mediates his presence in and through the church? How are they related to Christ’s three vocations as per the restoration of the image of God?
5. Historically stated in various ways, what are the five “marks” of a healthy church? Give a brief, one line, explanation of each. c.f. “Total Christ, Five Mark Church” (C.f. CPC Website, Shepherd Leader Class Study Guide, etc.)
6. What means of grace as mediated by the church is related to the presence of Christ as prophet, priest and king respectively?

Sacraments and Sacramental Spirituality (WCF 27, 28, 29)

1. What is a sacrament? Notice especially four distinguishing marks: WCF 27.1-2
2. Calvin explained that “no extent of space interferes with the boundless energy of the Spirit, which transfuses life into us from the flesh of Christ.” How does this help explain the meaning of “spiritual relation between the sign and the thing signified” as pertaining to the effacacy of a sacrament?
3. Is grace conferred in a sacrament? Explain. (c.f. WCF 27.3, 28.6, Theology Study Guide)
4. What is signified in Christian Baptism as related to the meaning of salvation? E.g. What does the water of Baptism teach about salvation?
5. What is signified in Holy Communion? E.g. What does the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper teach concerning salvation?
6. Who are the proper recipients of Christian Baptism?
7. Who are the proper recipients of the Lord’s Supper?
8. What is a “credible profession of faith” as related to admission to the Lord’s Supper? (c.f. From Baptism to Lord’s Supper Handout in Confessional Theology and Shepherd Leader Class)

Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience (WCF 20)

1. What are some of the liberties which Christ purchased for bvelievers under the gospel?
2. How does sin enslave us?
3. What is the so called “regulative principle” as articulated in WCF 20.2 (c.f WCF 1.6)
4. How does church power and Christian liberty work together?
5. Observe how the confession follows “Christian Liberty” (#20) with Chapter 21 Of Religious Worship, Chapter 22, “Of Lawful Oaths” and Chapter 23, “Of the Civil Magistrate.” Why do you think that is?
6. Briefly explain the following four distinctions relative to church polity. How do these disctinctions relate to liberty of consicience. (c.f. Priliminary Principals in Church Power, Shepherd Leader Class Handout)
   1. Church church acting jointly vs. the church acting severally.
   2. Socio-cultural forms vs. confessional elements in church polty.
   3. Spiritual power vs. Temporal power
   4. Weak/Strong vs. Sin/Righteousness

The Relation of Church and State (WCF 23)

1. What is the duty of the State?
2. What is the duty of individual Christians to the state?
3. How should the church acting jointly relate to the state? How do their respective purposes/mission differ?
4. How would the regulative principal apply to the church’s relation to the state?

Church Polity (c.f. Book of Church Order and Shepherd Leader Class Handouts)

**Part 1: Form of Government**

**BCO 1:**

1. Describe the three kinds of church government and their main distinctions. Support our form of government from Scriptures.

Episcopal:

Congregational:

Presbyterian:

2. Name the two offices in the Presbyterian Church? What is your view of the three office view and why?

**BCO 2:**

1. Of whom does the visible church consist?

2. Is the unity of the Body of Christ destroyed or maintained by denominationalism? Explain.

3. What determines if a denomination is a true branch of the Church of Christ?

**BCOs 3,4:**

1. What is the purpose of the church?

2. Whose law is the church to enforce?

3. When does the exercise of church power have divine sanction?

4. Who makes up the Session of a particular church?

5. When should convene the assembly of a congregation without teaching elders?

**BCO 5:**

1. What distinguishes a mission church from a particular church?

2. Who has the authority to organize a church?

3. Who may have the responsibility for overseeing a mission church?

4. How can a mission church be temporarily governed?

**BCO 6:**

1. Who are members of the church?

2. What is the difference between communing and noncommuning members? Why are young children not communicant members?

3. What are the rights and privileges of communicant membership? Of Noncommunicant membership?

**BCOs 7-9:**

1. Compare the office of teaching, ruling elder and deacon. What other views concerning “office” are within Presbygterianism and your thoughts? What passage/s of scripture would this latter view use for ruling elders?

2. What are the qualifications required for becoming a ruling elder?

3. List some of the duties of the Ruling elders.

4. Describe the office of Deacon as indicated in BCO and support from Scriptures?

1. What is the difference between the work of the elders and deacons (or in our case SLB)
2. If there is disagreement between the diaconate and session, which body has final word?
3. List some of the duties of deacons(SLB).

**Issues and Controversies:**

Women in Ministry

See *Women in Ministry,* Preston Graham

**BCOs 10, 11:**

1. Name the church courts and indicate their jurisdiction?

2. What is the purpose and power of church courts?

**BCO 12:**

1. List some of the specific duties of the Church Session.

2. Who may preside as Moderator of the Session?

3. What records must the session keep?

**BCO 13:**

1. List some of the specific duties of the Presbytery.

2. Who are the members of presbytery?

**BCO 14:**

1. List some of the specific duties of the General Assembly?

**BCO 15:**

1. Describe the difference between a committee and a commission? What does this difference have to do with church power?

**BCO 16:**

1. What are the three aspects of a call to the ministry?

2. Can any man be placed over a church as pastor without the election of that church?

3. Why ought every candidate for any office to be examined?

**BCO 20-23:**

1. In what areas is a man seeking ordination to the Gospel ministry to be examined?

2. What does a congregation agree to when installing a pastor?

3. How may a pastoral relation be dissolved?

**BCO 24:**

1. In what will prospective officers be examined?

2. Can a elder or deacon lay aside his office at any time if he so desires?

3. In what ways may an officer's relationship be dissolved?

**BCO 25:**

1. What is the procedure for calling a congregational meeting?

2. OF what does a quorum consist?

3. Who moderates this meeting?

4. Who owns church property in the PCA?

5. Upon what basis can a congregation withdraw from the PCA?

**BCO 26:**

1. What is the procedure for amending the BCO?

2. What is the procedure for amending the WCF?

**Part 2: The Rules of Discipline**

**BCO 27:**

1. What does the proper use of discipline maintain?

2. How does church discipline relate to the kingship of Christ?

3. What are the different means of exercising church discipline?

**BCO 28:**

1. How is the discipline of noncommuning members to be effected?

**BCO 29:**

1. What constitutes an offense?

2. What do we mean be the following types of offenses:

a. personal

b. general

c. private

d. public

**BCOs 30, 36:**

1. What should you do if you think a church member or a church officer is guilty of an offense?

2. Who is the "church" in Matthew 18:17?

**BCO 42:**

1. What is an appeal?

**BCO 43:**

1. What is a complaint?

**Part 3: Directory for the worship of God**

1. How are we to view this section of the BCO? Is any of it obligatory?

2. What are the goal's of pure worship?

3. What are the elements of true Christian worship?

4. May we add to or subtract from these in worship? Why?

5. What does it mean to "fence" the table and how ought we to "fence" it?

6. What is a distinctly Westminster Assembly idea of a “directory” approach to worship and how does it contrast with “formalism” and “free worship”?