

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 5 Leaders of the Church

By

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Living in Christ Ministries

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Lord, teach us, feed us, build us up, enlighten us, and open our eyes. Lord, we pray that You would speak to us now on this matter of church leadership, being used in the church to help others along the path. Unfold the Word, Lord, and make it living to us. Protect us from the deadness of the letter and bring to us the newness of the Spirit. And we just thank You that Your words are Spirit and life. And we ask You to protect us from the words and thoughts of man. Just speak to us through Your Holy Spirit through Your living and abiding Word. Please fill us with Your Spirit even as we receive Your Word that You might fill us with Your life. More and more we are learning that we can only live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Speak Your word in Your holy Scriptures into our lives now. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Leaders of the church is our subject. Too often the leaders of the church are patterned after the leaders of the world. Now there are those who have learned things in their walk with the Lord and even learned things as the Lord taught and disciplined them in the world. The Lord can certainly use these people in the church to show the spiritual application, if it is there one, for things that He is developing in their lives. But too often we take our pattern of church leadership right out of the world. We think if a man was greatly used in the world, he will automatically be greatly used in the church. This is not necessarily so at all. In fact sometimes it is quite the opposite. Sometimes those who are greatly used in the affairs of man just never become really fruitful in the affairs of God because they keep operating in the ways of the world. And the division of spirit and flesh does not develop in their lives by the sharp piercing sword of the Word of God.

On the other hand, sometimes those that the world looks on as so insignificant, they come to follow Jesus Christ and they become mighty in spirit and they become enormously fruitful in the church. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" ([John 18:36](#)). We want a biblical, spiritual perspective on leadership in the church. We are going to ask the Lord to speak to us in those ways. Under three headings: leadership positions, leadership qualifications, and leadership priorities.

First concerning leadership positions, let's look at [1 Timothy 3:1](#). In going through this, we want to make it very clear that no one in the church of Jesus Christ needs a title or needs to hold a recognized, biblical office or place of functioning, in order to be a leader. And the reverse is true also. Just because someone has a title, it does not make them a leader. So we do not want to get distracted on that dead-end street. This is really about letting God speak to us regarding things that He wants to do in our lives to make us all more useable. We can then press on and say to others: "Let's go. Let's follow the Lord."

But the Scriptures do speak of some leadership positions. The Scriptures and the church are not heavily packed like the American military. We are the army of God, but it is pretty simple. We basically have God as the captain of the host and then all of the troops. It is quite simple. And He may have a few lieutenants, but He does not have fourteen grades of leaders. What are you?—Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, Lieutenant, or Second

Lieutenant? What are you? It is so simple in God's army. I just love the way God works. He makes it where we can just be His children. In fact, we must be that.

[1 Timothy 3:1](#) addresses leadership positions. "This is a faithful saying. If a man desires the position of a bishop [or that word could and most often is translated overseer] he desires a good work." If a man desires to serve the Lord as a bishop or overseer—now of course in the American church you have your bishops and you have your overseers. We will break down any word we can to a new position, but in the Scripture it is the same word. Bishop or overseer is the same person.

"If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work." If a person desires to serve God that way, he is desiring a good thing; yet, it is impossible to know whether he desires it for good reasons or not. But what he desires is a good work. And if the desires are for good reasons, and the person lets the Lord do a good work in him, that good desire may be fulfilled someday. "This is a faithful saying." And this is speaking about a bishop or overseer in the church, an office of leadership.

Now we will read some other verses and then bring them all together. [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) says, "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain' and 'the laborer is worthy of his wages.'" This quote is from the Lord Jesus Himself, actually, as well as from the Old Testament.

Now we have another term, in addition to bishop and overseer, there is the term "elder." And we notice here that elders are to rule. Now that has to be put in the whole context of the Word of God. Who is the head of the church? Who is the Master? Who is the Captain? Jesus is. So the elders must rule in His name, by His Spirit, according to His Word. They become His instruments to guide His church.

People will ask, "Who runs this operation around here?" And they are usually looking for the pastor or board member or something. The ultimate answer must be that Jesus runs this operation, if you want to call it that, because He is in charge. But the people He uses in the church leadership are elders. The term "elder" implies a spiritual maturity. Just as bishop or overseer implies a spiritual accountability, looking over and then answerable to God.

So we have the term bishop or overseer, who is the same person; it is the same word or the same office. Then we have elder, and the elders are to rule. Now those who rule well are spiritually fruitful, Christ-like, humble, and obedient; and they are to be accounted worthy of double honor. See the elders rule. Why? It is because the church of Jesus Christ is not a democracy. It is not even really an oligarchy where a few rule. It is a theocracy. It is God in charge of His people. And He has ordained to work that primarily through the leadership of the elders. Since we are all in one family and minister to one another, we all end up taking a part in the process, in a spiritual process, not a Roberts Rules of Order process. The rule of order is right here—the Word of God. And as we live together in it, we all have a part in it because we all counsel one another. Leaders need to be led of the

Lord and by the counsel of the Lord also, through anyone who is walking according to the Word by the Spirit of God.

But the Lord leads primarily through His elders. And those who do that well in a God-pleasing way, they are to be accounted worthy of double honor. Double honor has kind of a play on words here. It is saying that they are to be considered appropriate to be given two kinds of value and one is obvious. The first thing you think of regarding honor is that of respect, a compliance with leadership, kind of a cooperative attitude. It is that kind of honor—a yielding to their place where the Lord has put them—as you yield to the Lord.

But then the other type of honor in the next verse, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain’” ([1 Timothy 5:18](#)). The first type of honor is obvious that you give to leaders, kind of a respect. Lest we miss what this other honor is, the Lord just calls it “double honor” because the Scripture says: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads on the grain and a laborer is worthy of his wages.” And that value given to leaders in the church is actually a financial remuneration. First is respect, then if they lead well, there is financial compensation. But notice what it says: “Especially those who labor in the Word and teaching.” A church family, if they are led of the Lord and are prospered and blessed to do it, can by the Lord’s guidance set aside those among them to compensate their time to serve the Lord in specific areas and ways in the body, as the Lord leads the church. There can be all kinds of compensated servants or workers from secretaries, to staff members, and other positions. But where does it start, biblically? It is especially for those who labor in the Word and doctrine.

To give you an example, we did the dumbest thing in Dallas. This is so obvious, but when you are blind you just do not see it. Four of us teamed up as a leadership team in this church that started in our home. And we were each given twenty-five dollars a month because the church body just wanted to give us something. They just wanted to show some double honor. Actually back in those days, that sometimes meant the difference between “sink or swim.” As we went to the cupboard and the cupboard was bare, well twenty-five dollars, boy! In those days we were paying ninety-five dollars for our house payment, so we could live a long ways on twenty-five dollars and that was a blessing.

But the Lord began to prosper us and we were in this big facility and we knew that we didn’t have the funds for any of us to fully be set apart to minister. So this place was so big and it needed a lot of paint. It was big enough to handle a congregation of 600 and at that time we were 50 people. So we had this great idea to have just one of the four, who was the leader over the facilities, we would start giving him \$100 a month. And though we would kind of work him into a full-time position as fast as we could, we looked at what he had to take care of, you know. Wrong! There were many in that body who would do anything if you would let them take care of the facility. They would be thrilled. So we were already doubly wrong.

“Let the elders who rule well be accounted for double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine.” Out of all of us, I was the one that was called there to put the most labor in getting in the Word and teaching it. And yet here I am, by my own human

logic and good old American religious tradition, I focused on how important the facility is and we took the man gifted in the facility care out! That is how dumb you can be when you do not take time to find out what the Word says about the church.

That is why Bible-committed churches are generally going to compensate somebody to give more of their time directly to the ministry of the body and building it up. They start out with compensating the pastor/teacher. And it is not just a custom or a tradition. In fact, some churches violate that, like we did. But this is the way the Lord has arranged it. Why? It is because that's the strategic issue in the church life. The Lord shepherds us through under-shepherds who feed us His Word and His will. That is how He leads His church and it is uppermost in importance. So if you have someone who can give more attention to the need and well-being, the health, growth, and spiritual vitality of the church, then you start by compensating the pastor/teacher. He is the shepherd who is feeding you the Word of God. All right, that is a leadership position of the bishop, overseer and elder.

And eventually our church in Dallas caught on before I did. They said, wait a minute, Bob. We sense something is a little askew here, you know. We would like you to stop painting houses while you are trying to study at the seminary and raise two kids. We would like you to give more attention to shepherding this flock. And they shifted things around. And many people dove in to help take care of that facility and this one brother who had been doing it praised God, because he felt awkward with how we had taken him out of that position. And it wasn't long before they started blessing us financially. We never, ever told them in twenty-five years of ministry what we should get for serving. Nothing is fine. Anything is better. But I remember the day that they said, "We are committed to giving your family \$400 a month." And the day that happened, I said to my wife, "You know, I think I just painted my last house. This body needs more care than I can possibly give it and there are plenty of other people out there waiting to paint people's houses." And the family soon increased to five, but before you know it, they said, we want to give you another hundred a month. And man, then we were even clothing our kids! It was tremendous.

Acts 20 is a great chapter on church leadership in itself. We will just look at two verses in Acts 20. Paul is on his last trip toward Jerusalem which is going to end up taking him eventually to Rome and to prison. This is his last pass by Ephesus. "And from Miletus [sort of a seaport city and Ephesus inland there in what we would now call Turkey] he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church." Okay, we have already come across that term "elder" in 1 Timothy 5 and we will see more of it later.

Paul called for the elders of the church. Verse 28 is part of what he told them: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." These are not all kinds of multiple offices, are they? The elders of the church are the overseers of the church. These are just two different terms over the same position, the same office, signifying different aspects of what they do. The elder, the more spiritually mature, and the overseer—they are to see over the entire flock. And a

synonym for overseer is bishop. So bishop, overseer, and elder are all talking about the same person or people. It says, “Among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”

In the world, leaders get their positions through all kinds of means. It is often by ability, giftedness, personality, talent, drive, deception, deceit, and coercion. There are all kinds of paths to leadership in the world. In the church, there is only to be one. The Scripture says, “Over which, or among which, the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” The developing and placing of leadership in the church of Jesus Christ is to be the will and choice of the head, Jesus Christ, implemented by the Spirit of Christ who works on us, in us, and among us. “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” ([Acts 20:28](#)).

So the elder/overseers are to shepherd the church of God. You know what that word is? Pastor sounds like pasture. A pastor is a pasturer—he leads the sheep to pasture. That is hard to say and sometimes hard to do too. A pastor pastures the sheep like the good shepherd described in John 10 and Psalm 23. He leads them to green pastures, particularly the luscious, spiritually green pastures of the Word of God. So the elder, the overseer/bishop is to be a pasturer. In other words, he is a pastor. Pastor, elder, overseer all three terms appear in one passage where one apostle is speaking to one group who are all the same. And of course, the world and religious systems have divided these up into all kinds of things.

Basically in the church, the primary leaders the Lord has ordained were also called undershepherds. Why? It is because Jesus is the chief shepherd. Why that term? Because we are like sheep. We are the flock of God and we have to be led. And oh, we have a good shepherd. He laid down His life for the sheep. And He raises up undershepherds who are willing to lay down their lives for the sheep. And they pasture His sheep in His name in the green pastures of the Word.

But the elder, the overseer, the pastor are the same person. It is much simpler than we have made it seem today. In the church-world you can get many groups who have all of these different offices and even in those offices, hierarchies of categories. God has a much simpler approach. Praise the Lord for that! We need it as simple as we can get it. And then we need to hear it over and over again, which is the wonderful ministry of reminding.

Remember Peter said, “I write this epistle to you to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” ([2 Peter 3:1-2](#)). One of the greatest ministries one-to-another is reminding each other of the simple, clear things taught in the word that we too easily forget. It is a tremendous ministry.

All right, these are leadership positions. We see elder, overseer, pastor and [1 Timothy 3:8](#) says, “Likewise deacons must be reverent.” So now we are talking about deacons. In the early verses of chapter three, which we will look at in a moment, we were looking at elders or bishops or overseers or pastors. Now starting at verse 8, we are looking at

another position of leadership called “deacons.” Literally the word means “servants.” It is interesting in the American church how people often fight and lobby to get voted on the servant board. You sometimes wonder if they know what it is supposed to be? I mean, you do not have to lobby for something if it is appointment by the Holy Spirit. And you do not have to crave after it because of the prestige and power if you realize it means servant. Deacons are servants.

[Acts 6:1-6](#) could perhaps be called the prototype of the deacon ministry in the early church. The early church was being led in Jerusalem which was the only place it existed. It was led by apostles, who were the only real leaders at that time. Eventually they would go out, evangelize, plant churches, and come back to appoint elders—that is pastors and overseers. But in Jerusalem, the church was led by apostles.

Now in these days the number of the disciples was multiplying into the thousands on the Day of Pentecost. Later a miracle, the response to the gospel brought thousands more. There arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists. That is, against the Jewish Christians by the Christians with Greek backgrounds, the Gentiles. The Gentile widows, were being neglected in the daily distribution of the supply of resources for the family of God. Then the twelve apostles, who were leading the church there, summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables” ([Acts 6:2](#)). See, they were giving themselves to ministering the Word and the problem was in the serving of tables. It was not being done sufficiently, carefully, godly, or fairly. So it needed attention.

The Lord wants to give attention to every issue and need in the church. They might not all be of the same critical or basic fundamental priority, but they are all important to God. “Therefore brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom whom we may appoint over the business.” In other words, share with us the godly people you see in the body. We will take a look at them and we will appoint them over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. “And the saying pleased the whole multitude” ([Acts 6:3-5](#)). This was a blessing, it was direction from the Lord.

“And they chose Stephen a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Tyman, Parmenus and Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch. Whom they set before the apostles and when they had prayed they laid hands on them.” What is being appointed here? Basically and practically they were appointing servant-helpers to meet some basic needs that the leaders, who were called to minister the Word, would have to make a trade-off to do. They would have to leave what they were primarily called to do in order to take care of the need at the tables, the distribution of supplies. And God wanted all the needs met, from the feeding of the Word to the feeding of the body. But He had appointed some to do one thing and some to do the other.

And one of the serious mistakes that happens in the American church, is those who are called by God to lead the sheep into the green pastures of the Word are just consumed with other valid needs. And sometimes those needs are invalid. But it is as though they

are waiting on tables all the time. It is important in the eyes of God that those needs be met and supplied. This requires helping people where there is lack. But some are called to do one thing and some are called to do another. And the apostles were functioning as the shepherd, overseers, and the elders of the first church in Jerusalem. And as it exploded in size, they could not meet all these individual needs which got to be more involved very early on in the ministry. These other duties started to cut into their time in prayer and time in the Word. So God wants to sort out some servant-helpers to assist the elders, overseers, and pastors.

A real distinction in the elder-pastor ministry and the deacon-servant ministry is that the deacons help out in a given area as servants. They take care of those widows' tables by the grace of God and under the oversight of the elders-pastors they help in those given areas. Whereas the overseers, the elders, the spiritually mature, the pastors, the feeder-teacher-guiders, they are to be responsible for the whole church. That is a strategic difference in the two positions. And they both have a critical role, but you cannot just indiscriminately mix the two. They are distinctive in their own purpose and calling and we will see that even in some of their qualifications, though not all.

It is very obvious in Acts 6 that those men who served tables had to be godly, led of the Spirit, disciples. They are not elders. Maybe they are not into all of the areas and arenas of spiritual maturity that the Lord wants to keep developing in them. In fact, no man on earth will ever be fully matured. But deacons have servant hearts and they want to be led by God and used of God. And they have a wonderful opportunity.

In Dallas we had a young church and I was the pastor at age twenty-nine. There was only one man in the church older than me and he was the father-in-law of the assistant pastor. And so we thanked God and gave him the treasury to keep. We praised the Lord because there was someone who knew something about taking care of financial responsibility. I sure did not. Before I was saved I was the most financially irresponsible person I knew of. I knew some pretty irresponsible people and even though God can change those things in people, He will not have one person doing everything. And He did supply us with someone we needed. But everybody else was younger and I was like the old man around town. The world would say that they stay one week ahead of the hounds, I was just trying to keep one week ahead of the sheep, you know—lest they grazed right up my back!

But we had a young church and a lot of babies. I remember times when there were eight women pregnant in the church at once and it was a church of 300 or so. You know that is a lot of women pregnant at the same time. Then in the nursery we would have explosive church growth. We had two deacons whose full-time ministry was the oversight of the nursery and they were deacons. These men had godly wives and all four of them worked together as a team. Believe me, it taxed them. They were fully stretched right there just in that area. I remember early on, making many emergency nursery calls myself to stamp out fires and change diapers. Sometimes even on the babies! But praise the Lord when servants are raised-up who will help the overseers in given areas like the sound ministry, the out-reach ministry, and the home Bible study ministry. That is what was happening here in Jerusalem as seen in the book of Acts.

The primary leadership positions designated in Scripture are the elders-pastors-overseers, all one category. Each church might have one or more. And even if they have more, only one of them might be the pastor-teacher and the others are shepherd-elders that do some feeding, but they are not the feeding leader that leads by feeding the sheep of God. And then you have the deacons, the servants, the willing-hearted helpers. But all of them are to be spiritually minded and spiritually hearted persons. They are to be committed to the Lord, growing and willing to keep growing, sacrificing and willing to keep sacrificing, learning and willing to keep learning.

Now what about leadership qualifications? Let's look in the book of 1 Timothy 3 to find what kind of lives the Lord develops in order to use in these positions. Or to put it another way, if we are serving in these roles, practically or officially, what does God want to be making us more and more like? There is not man or woman on earth in the church who would perfectly fit 100% of the details in all of these qualifications. In fact, just reading them is very humbling. I think the devil loves to show up at the reading of the leadership qualifications. You know it is like he says, "Whoa man read them. You read them, I'll shoot them. You tell them what God wants them to be. I will remind them what they are not." You know it is that kind of a thing. We are not ignorant of the devil's schemes, praise the Lord. So we can press on in this, knowing that there is to be a significant reality of these qualities in the lives of leaders.

After twenty-five years of being an apostle, Paul said in [Philippians 3:12](#), "Not that I have already attained or am already perfected." Do not think that I and Christ have exactly the same kind of life. I am still growing. And so it must be in this picture too, we must beware of the condemnation. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" ([Romans 8:1](#)). The accuser of the brethren has a great heyday here if we let him.

On the other hand, we do not take these without a serious concern. It is not that we just take them lightly. Oh, not at all. We know these represent things God wants to do in people's lives, as He brings them on to leadership. And these qualities appearing in any of our lives will further equip us to be more fully used by God to touch other lives for His glory.

Leadership qualifications. First for the elders (the overseers, pastor-teachers) [1-Timothy 3:2](#) says, "A bishop then [an overseer, elsewhere called an elder, a pastor] must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach." Blameless, now that is not in the sense of sinless perfection. There was only one on earth who ever fit that role. That is Jesus Christ. But we are to be growing unto His image so that when a person is spoken of or viewed, the first things that come to mind are not issues of obvious short-comings. He is to be blameless in the sense that there is no clear, on-going violation of the standards and the ways of God. And if there is, that person is so quick to want to have it dealt with, removed from his life.

“The husband of one wife”— there has been debate in the church on this one and I am sure we will not be able to settle that in three minutes of exposition. But obviously, how leaders relate to their wives is critical. He is to be the husband of one wife. It would obviously rule out any religiously foolish man in church life who is trying to relate to more than one woman at once. It would also clearly relate to those who have been divorced and remarried and have those cycles going on with the world’s reasoning.

Now the Lord has prescribed, by mercy, two exceptions to “That the two shall be one flesh for life, and what God has joined together let no man tear asunder.” Basically that is the physical, sexual unfaithfulness which is taught against in the gospels. And in 1 Corinthians 7, the other exception is desertion, the turning their back on the marriage, especially when there is a believer there and they just will not take their responsibilities toward that family.

So it is not referring to someone who has treated marriage lightly and is continuing to treat marriage lightly. Now it doesn’t mean that someone who has failed in this area cannot ever be a church leader. It just has to do with other issues. Is he the husband of one wife now, really? Was he married? Well, why isn’t he still married to that wife now? Well, if there was a biblical exception for that dissolution of the marriage, fine. Then they are not disqualified from being an elder is what the Lord is saying. They are not the husband of two wives. If God says you are no longer bound, then they are not bound. This does not mean that sexual unfaithfulness or desertion automatically cause you to jump to divorce. God can turn those things around too; but sometimes people will not let Him. And God is merciful in spite of the hardness of your heart. He said I will grant you mercy here, though My will and desire is that life-long partnership.

One other thing is that leaders in the church are not to be men who are flirtatious and develop all kinds of on-going physical, emotional, or carnal relationships. They should not even have relationships with the women of the family of God. That is dead wrong. That would violate this principle because they are not really being the husband of one wife. They are saying they are monogamous, while they are subtly betraying it through all kinds of innuendoes and other things. So, the husband and wife relationship is critical in leadership.

Temperate means that they have moderation about their behavior. Sober-minded does not mean that they don’t have the joy of the Lord. They are not to be Pastor Lemonface, you know. Their favorite hobby should not be chewing lemons. And just every time you look at them it is like the judgment of God is etched on their face forever. But being sober-minded means that we have the joy of the Lord and we have a great time in the Lord. But it is having a seriousness for the things of God and gravity toward the eternal stakes of heaven and hell. And they know the difference between man and God and the carnal and the spiritual, and it brings a sobriety to their lives, gravity. And that is a mark of a leader too.

Of good behavior means that He not only wants the leader to stay away from things that are obviously ungodly, he wants him to stay away from things that can become foolish. He wants the elder to stay away from foolishness

The elder must be hospitable. Show me a pastor that does not like to open his life and his home to people and I would say this person was called to something else in the body of Christ. A non-hospitable pastor, because of personality or human loyalties or maybe just his own personality and human charisma, has ended up in the wrong ministry. The elder is to be hospitable. Shepherds are to love to hang out with the sheep. We are not to be like the guy who said, “I would love pastoring, if it weren’t for the people.”

All of us can understand that we get on each other’s nerves and we can disappoint and frustrate each other no matter who we are. But a man who really believes that people are the worst part of ministry and he is not just kidding that man should not be a pastor. Being hospitable was one of the joys of shepherding in the flock of God for twenty-five years before the Lord sent me out to the flock around the world. And hanging out with the people of God was a blessing. And I still love it and I can do it unto exhaustion. It is just a joy!

But pastor-teachers, elders, overseers, are to be able to teach or apt to teach. There should be some aptitude in teaching. We will not find this listed in the qualifications for deacons. There are a lot of common qualifications or characteristics in the two lists for elders and deacons. This one does not recur. That does not mean that deacons cannot teach, it just means they do not have to be able to. It also doesn’t mean that pastors, elders, teachers cannot do things that are of a non-teaching ministry. They can but the elder, pastor has to be able to teach. The deacon does not have to be able to teach. The elder is a pastor, a feeder. And they are to be feeding the sheep the Word of God. There has to be that capacity to get in the Word, feed on the Word and serve up meals from the Word of God. There has to be that ability, it is critical. And very often in the American church this is violated or misunderstood or just not given any attention. And you have dynamic human leaders leading in human religious operations. And sometimes you have good-hearted servants who love God, who should be turned loose in the area of their gift and calling, instead of being urged or allowed to be pastors. This is because they are not apt to teach and it is a critical issue.

The elder is not to be given to wine. We are to be filled with the Spirit, not drunk with wine. This addresses leaders having their lives influenced not just by alcohol but things like that—anything that would have a strong influence on us. The Lord is saying this person should not be leading officially or formally. Now listen, a lot of those who are leaders now at one time were heavily given to wine. You know. The only reason I wasn’t is I couldn’t stand it. I guarantee that if I had liked it then I would have been given to it. This is because every other wrong thing that I liked that much, I totally gave myself over to it with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I gave myself to sin in the areas that I like. There are people that the world would call total dope heads who are now great spiritual leaders in the kingdom of God. And in many of them are in churches that we fellowship with a lot. Praise the Lord! That is wonderful. That is the evidence of the

transforming grace and the power of God. But they are not to be guzzling wine between Sunday services.

And elders are not to be violent. You know there is a violent streak in some church leaders. They are just lashing out at the sheep. You would think that they are not shepherds. Shepherds do not growl at the sheep. Dogs and wolves do that, you know. Now I am not saying that everyone who has ever growled at a sheep is a dog or a wolf, but they are acting like it at the time. And when we are in Christ and we do not act like Christ, we are acting in the flesh, the world, and the devil. But leadership is not to be characterized by violence. Church leaders are not to be banging heads.

Elders are not to be greedy for money. Many of the world's leaders are in those positions because of their covetous drive to get the bucks. That is what got them to the top. It must not be that way in the church of Jesus Christ. "Freely we have received, freely shall you give" ([Matthew 10:8](#)). We are just there to give out with no strings attached what God has given to us. We are not there for the money. God does provide and I am amazed how He has provided for us. In twenty-eight years of service, He has not allowed me to ever put a monetary value on any service; whether it is preaching, teaching, counseling, marrying, funerals, you name it. He has just absolutely prevented me from both the desire and even the temptation to do these things for the money.

Praise the Lord, He has blessed us; and He not only supplies all our needs, He gives us things that we do not need but just enjoy! My wife and I have been committed to a simple lifestyle all of our lives. It seems like the more we have walked with Him, the more material things we have had that we really did not need to have. It just makes you want to give more to others and plow it back into the kingdom of God.

And then the elder is to be gentle. When Jesus needed, He could confront in a godly, holy roughness, the hypocrisy and deception present in people. But for anyone who was humble, meek, needy, and repentant He was the gentle shepherd. A good shepherd will beat away the destructive things with His rod while He pulls the sheep to safety with His staff. He is gentle and we need to be gentle with people, not roughing each other up. Leaders that are roughing each other up are either patterning after the world or are have not let God crucify that part of their flesh. God help us to be gentle with each other.

The elder is not to be quarrelsome. He is not to be leading by fussing at people. "I'm telling you, you shut up. I'm right; you're wrong. I'm master; you're slave. If you don't believe it, tell me why and I'll show you you're wrong." That is not leadership. That is just berating and beating and God help us just to avoid quarrelsomeness.

And the elder is not to be covetous. Again not trying to gather and collect material things.

[1 Timothy 3:4-5](#) says, "One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence, for if a man does not know how to rule his own house how will he take care of the church of God?" How we function in our household speaks to the opportunities, the dimensions and doors that God opens for us in the bigger family of

God. We have little household families of believers led by those who might become spiritual leaders in the bigger household. And what does or does not happen in the home has a direct relationship to what will or will not happen in new opportunities of service in leadership in the large church.

Now this is an exceedingly humble section to read for anyone. Again no one is exempt in a fallen world where there is the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every household, including the kids and especially the teenage kids, are very vulnerable to these things. This is not a call to perfection. It is just that there is an obvious demonstration of spiritual leadership necessary in the home. That is, bringing the issue of submission before the children and building it into their lives. And when there is rebellion, as there will be in any place where there is flesh, the leader of that home will be used of God to begin to deal with that rebellion. There must be a real demonstration of spiritual leadership. And you can see that there are a few verses on this because it is a critical issue. And again it can be so discouraging and condemning when you read this yourself in Scripture and you think: “I was just hanging on by a thread and you just clipped it!”

God gives grace to the humble. Just keep that in your heart. There is the question of how perfect does our family life have to be? And people say, where do you draw the line? Well, you do not draw the line, God draws the line. We have to seek the Lord on these issues as leaders. And you know in the early church the people all came out of paganism, those who were not from Jerusalem. And Paul went throughout the Mediterranean world and evangelized. Those new believers came out of pagan homes. Yet he goes back four months later and appoints elders from among them.

So this issue is somewhat relative. There is an absolute, which is Christ-likeness, but there is another relative factor. If you are in a city and there are fifty people in the church, God will probably appoint the most godly man as the leader. You might think that he has so many areas where he needs to grow. But he obviously has been growing. And if he keeps that heart, he will be conformed more and more to these things. So, God draws the lines in every fellowship. But these are seriously sobering things to pray about. But again this is not a demand for perfection. That is so clear from just the general context of the whole Word of God. But family life is a critical issue for knowing who is going to lead, where, and how much.

Next: “Not a novice lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil”—which was pride. We see in Isaiah 14, and Ezekiel 28 that pride is what devastated Satan. Pride is what devastates man now. A novice, a new convert, or a new believer might have a heart aflame for God, he might have all kinds of talent and abilities and zeal, but we are not to have them saved today and appoint them as elders tomorrow. And we blow this in so many ways.

Someone comes out of the world, who is a famous football hero and he is saved one weekend and he is speaking before 10,000 people at a rally the next weekend about the joys of the Christian life and how to serve God. Why are they allowed to do that? It is because we are impressed with their fame. And we do not take seriously the spiritual

qualifications from Scripture. And you know what we often do? We destroy those brethren because many of them do fall into the snare and reproach of the devil. While they are testifying, the enemy has his troops there shooting arrows, flaming missiles at the young converts head. And he is testifying of how much he loves God and he is so thankful that God saved his soul. He had been so prideful and rebellious and worldly and the devil is just pumping in arrows. “Man, you are hot stuff. Boy, is God blessed to have you! Man, you are going to be the greatest thing to ever hit the kingdom of God. Look at that 10,000 people hanging on every word you say.” Often it is not too many weeks and there is a fall. So may the Lord lead us and guide us in these things.

When you get into the deacons in verses 8-10, just notice: “Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double tongued, not given to much wine, nor greedy for money, holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested then let them serve as deacons being found blameless.”

With some of the early deacons we appointed in Dallas, it was kind of like, “I guess they might work, let’s take a shot. This looks like the best gamble we’ve had yet.” Oh, we made some tragic mistakes for those men and for the church. One day we were praying about some of these things and this phrase leaped out at us. “Let them first be tested.” We thought: “Lord, maybe you would want us to let them be tested this way. We will just all seek and serve you, minister to one another the best we know how. And we will ask You to show us those among us who are functioning as servants. And then we will give You the glory by saying, ‘God’s raised up a deacon among us. Glory be to God.’” Then there were no guesses, no gambles, no shot in the dark. We just recognized what God had done. Wow, camp on that phrase, “what God has done,” when you are in prayer over such things, brethren.

And by the way, if we want to be recognized as servants for the sake of having more opportunity to serve, and we have a godly desire not just for prestige or power—then just serve. Just serve the Lord. That is how God is recognized as working in someone’s life. It says, “Let them serve as deacons being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.” That husband-wife relationship again is critical. It says, “Let deacons be the husband of one wife ruling their children and their own houses well, for those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness of the faith which is in Christ Jesus” ([1 Timothy 3:12-13](#)).

Don’t you see how many similarities there are there between elders and deacons in spiritual qualities of life? In other words, as one brother said, “The Lord is calling us all to Christ-likeness.” Really the main difference is the range of responsibility and the aptitude of teaching. Those are about all of the differences. We are talking about spiritual people being used by God, who is Spirit, to build a spiritual kingdom by the work of the Holy Spirit. So that is why these qualifications are critical. We are looking at spiritual character and spiritual fruit and in a sense that is what God wants to develop among us. The more we see of this in people’s lives, the more God wants to use them in church ministry.

Now this is our last section on leaders of the church. We have looked at leadership positions, leadership qualifications, and now we will look at leadership priorities. We will take a quick look at them and then maybe read some of them.

[Luke 10:38-42](#) says that we are to be living and serving with our hearts abiding at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Acts 6:4 says that leaders are to be given continually to the Word and to prayer.

Matthew 20:25-28 says that servanthood characterizes all that we do in the name of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:1 is the last one which says that we are to be letting God make us increasingly into Christ-like examples. As I follow Christ, follow me. It is that sort of thing—being a demonstration of Christ among the flock.

There are leadership priorities. [Luke 10:38-42](#) is a high priority for instruction in leadership.

“Now it happened as they went [the disciples] that He [Jesus] entered a certain village and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving and she approached Him and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her.’”

This is teaching about the one necessary thing and it came out in the lives of these disciples—Martha, Mary, Lazarus. Jesus is in their home and Martha working hard to prepare a place to bless and serve the Lord. Mary is out there seated at the Lord’s feet. Martha is worried and troubled about many things. It is so easy for church leaders, church workers, church servants, to get so into their “doing of service,” that they forget what they are doing, why they are doing it, and how it is to be done. And the very serving becomes a distraction.

They may begin to think: “Oh, I have to set these chairs up again. What happened to the three people who used to help me? Lord, get them!” That is kind of the way Martha was as she labored in the kitchen. As hostess she was going to bless the Lord with a meal and all. But she was getting all uptight and then it comes to her mind: “Why isn’t Mary in here serving the Lord? She is out there sitting in the living room talking. Give me a break.” Martha goes out there to the Lord knowing she is going to get a confirmation. “Lord, don’t You realize that I need help and Mary has left me here to serve alone. Tell her to get in the kitchen.” You know she was expecting, the Lord to say, “Come on,

Mary, be practical. You cannot sit here like a mystic. You are so heavenly minded, you are no earthly good. Get in that kitchen.” This thinking is backwards. It is being heavenly minded that makes us earthly good—like Jesus. Martha must have been shocked when the Lord said, “Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things. One thing is necessary and Mary chose it.” She must have thought: “Oh my goodness. I blew it. Mary chose the God-part by sitting at His feet, receiving His word.”

Leaders must keep that as a top priority. We have to live life and serve at the feet of Jesus Christ. Oh, we may be sent to the kitchen. We may be busy in doing this and that, but we have to have our heart always at His feet. [Acts 6:4](#) says that we have to give ourselves continually to the Word and prayer. Others may serve the tables and help and we praise the Lord for them. We might on occasion do it directly ourselves but particularly for the shepherd (pastor, elder) we have to devote ourselves to the Word and prayer. Everyone who is going to serve God has to live in His Word and by prayer.

[Matthew 20:28](#) says that we have to be servants. “Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.” This means we are not in ministry to get but to give. It is so easy on the leader when people want to help and they love you and they encourage you. And praise God for that. But it is so easy for the flesh to think: “Hey, they are here to bless me. Man, I can get a lot out of this.” And it perverts the whole thing. We are servants and that is how we lead, as servants.

And then 1 Corinthians 11 tell us that we are to follow others as they follow the Lord, becoming examples of Christ to others.

In conclusion, God does not expect us to be perfect but He wants us to be spiritually mature and maturing. That is what He wants for leaders and He wants us to understand we are servants and not “big shots.” “Oh you are a big shot in the church, huh?” “Yes, I get the privilege of sweeping it out every week—God has blessed me.” That kind of big shot sure is great. But when you are a big shot and you tell everybody what to do and they just jump and do it—no! The Lord tells us where to go and how to serve Him, but He is not sitting off like some barking sergeant. He went down the servant’s path ahead of us and He is right with us continually, as we are serving Him. That is the kind of leadership we want to live out.

Let’s pray together.

Lord, make us more and more the kind of people with this kind of heart and vision. Lead us more into leadership as You make us what You want us to be. And where we fail and come short, give us humility of heart, calling out in repentance for Your grace and cleansing. And then just keep transforming us into the image of Christ. It is in Jesus’ name we pray.
Amen.