

# Biblical Eldership

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you're there with me, would you stand as we honor the Word of God together again, 1 Timothy chapter 5, beginning in verse 17 through verse 25.

! And the laborer deserves his wages.

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. No longer drink water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

[ 1 : 26 ] The sins of some people are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? In passages like Job chapter 12, verses 7 through 10, and Proverbs chapter 6, verses 6 through 8, God reveals that there are lessons for us to learn and wisdom to gain from the instinctual behavior of animals and insects that He's created.

Take geese, for example. Have you ever wondered why geese fly in a V formation? When geese migrate, they fly in a V formation primarily to conserve energy.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird next to it. The V formation reduces air drag. It creates a slipstream, making it easier for the flock to fly together longer distances than they could on their own.

I read that a flock of geese flying in a V formation can cover a distance seven times greater than a goose could cover flying on its own.

[ 3 : 09 ] Geese fly around 2,000 to 3,000 miles when they migrate, so that makes a huge difference to be able to cover that much more ground flying together.

Now, the goose at the point of the V in the lead, leading the way, does not stay in the lead for the entire journey. When the leader gets tired from breaking the wind resistance for the rest of the flock, it rotates to the back of the V, and another goose from the back comes up to take its place.

And so I think what God teaches us through that example in his creation is that a shared purpose and shared leadership produces results that benefit everyone.

This kind of shared purpose, shared leadership with results that benefit everyone is what the Lord commands of his church.

As we've seen when we looked at the qualifications for an elder in 1 Timothy 3, verses 1 through 7, the model we see in the church in the New Testament is a plurality, multiple elders who serve together to shepherd the Lord's flock, overseeing its ministries as the church seeks together to fulfill its mission to go and make disciples and disciple those disciples that have been made as the Lord commands.

[ 4 : 42 ] The church was designed and it was chosen by God to be the channel through which God's saving truth flows to the world.

It has temporarily replaced Israel in that capacity because of the nation's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. And so now it's the church's task in our time to be the light to the world, to be the organization through which the gospel is proclaimed, sinners are saved and saints are sanctified. The church is to be a visible representation of the transformative power of the gospel, revealing God's glory and drawing people, we pray, to him as a result.

To do that, the church must seek to model godliness as we encourage one another in the church to seek holiness, to pursue righteousness, to be obedient to God and his commands.

Peter summed all this up in 1 Peter 2, verse 9. Speaking of the church and Christians who compose it, he says, But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[ 6 : 14 ] For the church to fulfill its calling, it is important that its leaders, its elders, fulfill their calling. We know that the church in Ephesus, that's the church that Timothy was pastoring, that Paul was writing to Timothy.

The church in Ephesus, we know, was suffering from the influence of false teachers amongst its own membership, some of whom probably had or were currently serving as elders in the church when Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter to Timothy.

Those false teachers, their bad doctrine, their strange teaching created disorder in the church. And so Paul wrote to Timothy instructing him in how to put what was in disorder back into order. And he gives him instructions. And he tells him in 1 Timothy 3, 14 through 15, very clearly, the purpose for why he wrote this letter. I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and a buttress of the truth.

For the church to be a pillar and buttress of the truth, it needs men to lead it who trust and who obey God's word.

[ 7 : 46 ] The Old Testament is full of examples of the corrupting influence bad leadership had on God's chosen people.

Hosea said, like people, like priests. God called Israel to proclaim his character, his commands. They were to be a light to the Gentiles.

Their leaders were to set the example of godliness for others to follow. But tragically, that too often wasn't the case to the point where God set them aside for a time, using his church as the vessel through which his truth is proclaimed instead today.

Now, you don't need me to tell you that too often it's been the case that leaders in the church today have followed the tragic example of leaders in the Old Testament.

We've also witnessed how some churches today, instead of dealing with those kind of issues head on, have sought to cover them up either because the leader is charismatic or they want to avoid doing a hard thing.

[ 9 : 05 ] But there are a lot of good leaders in the church today. There are faithful men who serve well as elders. And it appears that the church in Ephesus had some good elders.

At least they had one. They had Timothy. But they also had bad ones who needed replacing. And so Timothy was to appoint elders who met the qualifications that Paul listed in chapter 3.

He was to also expel the ones who were disqualified based on their not meeting those qualifications. But what if this happened again?

What if Timothy goes through this process? He finds men who are qualified. They're appointed. They're set apart to lead in the church. And those men, some of those men persist in sin.

And they're back at this point where that needs to be dealt with. What happens then? What happens if that, what should they do? I should say if that happened again. What if the elders who met the qualifications at one point no longer did?

[ 10 : 14 ] Well, Paul takes on that issue here as he gives further instructions for the church. He also makes important comments about elders who serve faithfully.

Elders who serve well. And so the main idea for this morning's sermon is that the church must honor and protect elders who serve well while also protecting themselves and honoring God by rebuking those who don't.

The church must honor and protect elders who serve well while also protecting themselves and honoring God by rebuking those who don't. How is the church to do this?

Well, Paul's instructions in our text this morning answer that question. Before we proceed in answering that question, I think we need to stop and ask another question.

Why does this matter? Why should we care? Well, brother, sister in Christ, God has given you a responsibility. He's commanded you to honor and to protect elders who serve well in the church.

[ 11 : 26 ] Hebrews 13, 17 says to the church, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. On the flip side of that, you have a responsibility, church member, to hold leaders accountable.

In this case, to hold the elders accountable when one of them is persisting in sin, because as we'll see, there are consequences if we don't do this.

I think this also matters because there's a lot of churches that have abandoned biblical eldership, and they did this a long time ago, many of them. And instead of adopting the model that God has given us in His Word, they have adopted a model that comes from the business world.

Oftentimes, we see churches in our nation and in many other nations, they have one elder, they have one pastor who serves like a CEO, and they have a leadership team, maybe a board of deacons, and that team, that group, serves as like his board of directors.

[ 12 : 45 ] Members of the church are viewed as shareholders. Visitors are viewed as potential customers. If the numbers are good, lots of people are coming, lots of people are giving.

If the numbers are good, the CEO keeps his job. Even sometimes, if he persists in sin, efforts are made by the board of directors to keep it quiet, to maybe even cover it up, to downplay it, because they think if he goes, then the numbers will go with them.

We have elders in our church, but I think it's important for us and why this matters is that we advocate to other Christians and other churches who don't have elders that we be advocates to them, that this is the way that God has told us to lead his church, to have a plurality of elders.

I know some of you have experienced the difficulty that not having a plurality of elders can bring to a church. And you know, someone might ask you one day, if they haven't already, your church has elders.

Why does your church have elders? And through what you hear today, you'll hopefully be able to answer that question even better. If you're an unbeliever here this morning, we are glad that you're here.

[ 14 : 20 ] And maybe you've experienced how dysfunctional churches can be. You've experienced how dysfunctional leaders can be in a church. We are imperfect people following a perfect Savior.

You may have a bad view of the church. You may think that all churches are alike, that all the problems that you've experienced or seen in one church is the same problems you'll experience in any other church.

And friend, I hope that today you will see our desire at Highland Park Baptist Church as a local church body to do what is right. We want to do what is pleasing to the Lord.

We're not perfect, but we want to obey what God has commanded in his word. And so I hope you'll see a difference, at least this morning, in how we handle God's word.

I hope that you've experienced a difference already in the way that we have worshipped the Lord to this point. And I hope that today the Lord will reveal to you in his grace what is missing in your life.

[ 15 : 38 ] You're going to hear the good news of who he is and what he's done this morning. And I hope that today is the day of your salvation. We've prayed for you.

We're glad, excuse me, that you're here. The church must honor and protect elders who serve well while also protecting themselves and honoring God by rebuking those who don't.

And so there's two principles here. The first principle has a couple of actions. The second principle has a couple of reasons as to why we need to do this. So the first principle, the church must honor and protect elders who serve well.

And so there's two principles Paul looks first at elders who elder well and how the church should support them so that they continue to elder well, lead well.

And so first the church must honor elders and they do that by providing them with financial support if needed. Verse 17a, the beginning of verse 17.

[ 16 : 47 ] Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, Paul says. Elders is a term used to describe those who oversee the church, those who shepherd, those who pastor the congregation together.

They serve together as spiritual leaders of the church, ministering primarily to the spiritual needs of the members. In Acts chapter 20, verses 17 and verse 28, there are three words used there to describe those who lead the church.

Pastor, elder, overseer, and they are used interchangeably in describing the same position. Pastor emphasizes the leaders in the church, their shepherding or feeding function.

Overseer emphasizes their authority in their call to lead the church in that function. And then elder emphasizes their spiritual maturity as individuals who make up this group.

The elders Paul mentioned here are those who meet the qualifications and as a result, they rule well. Now, rule, that word in the Greek, means to lead, to stand before, to preside, and to direct.

[ 18 : 15 ] It's used eight times in the New Testament and carries the idea of active, personal involvement for the benefit, the welfare of others.

The elder who rules well actively seeks to know those whom God has entrusted into his care.

He models the example of servant leadership that Jesus demonstrated and that he commands of those who he sets aside, who he calls to lead his church.

In Matthew 20, 25 through 28, Jesus gave this very important principle, this truth about leading and those who are to lead in his church, how they are to do that, how they are to view themselves.

But Jesus called them, his disciples, to him, and he said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them.

[ 19 : 19 ] It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus' instruction here and in other places calls for a style of leadership that is in sharp contrast to the style of leadership that seeks to dominate other people, that seeks to be in a position of authorities to have power over others because maybe in doing so that person has their, a boost to their ego or they just like to exercise control over other people in an unhealthy way.

I'm the youngest in my family. I have two older sisters. I never, growing up, received the responsibility from my parents to, to oversee my sisters whenever they left us home alone.

I was the youngest. When my older sister was gone, that responsibility went to my other sister and when they were both gone, I was only responsible for myself and I guess our dog. My first real taste of authority was when I was in the sixth grade and I was elected captain of the safety patrol.

Now you wanted to be on the safety patrol because safety patrol members got to get out of class five minutes, sometimes ten minutes before everybody else. not only, not only that, but you also received an orange, like, belt sash.

[ 21 : 18 ] And our job was to man the crosswalks. Our job was to make sure that all the other kids got safely home without getting ran over.

Now the captain, not only did you have the orange sash, but you also got a badge. Nobody else got a badge. The captain got a badge and it looked like a police officer's badge and it said captain on it and I pinned it right there on my sash.

And my job as captain was to make sure that everybody else was doing their job. So I just walked around and made sure, okay, you're in your place, you've got your stop sign, okay, you're over there, very good, very good.

But the authority went to my head and I would just kind of stand back and watch them and that's all I did and I just got really nitpicky with what they were doing, how they were doing it and what I thought they should do better to the point where they reported me to our teacher and she stripped me of my badge.

Though she continued to let me serve on the safety patrol. You see, I forgot an important lesson that though I was in a position of authority, there was somebody in position of authority over me.

[ 22 : 35 ] Elders who rule well, who serve well, are men who don't aspire to the position just because of the title but because they desire to be obedient to the Lord and they want to give themselves away in a sense, in a way that benefits other people seeking nothing for themselves.

and they never forget that though they may have some authority, that they are always under the authority of someone much greater, the Lord Jesus Christ.

They are under shepherds of the good shepherd and that never changes. They are stewards of the master. They are slaves of the king.

As Christians, we should honor one another. Whether that person is an elder or not, we should honor one another and especially those who have received the sacred task to oversee our Lord's church.

1 Thessalonians 5, 12 through 13 says, we ask you brothers to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, speaking of the elders, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

[ 24 : 04 ] Be at peace among yourselves. So elders should be honored, I think, doubly honored because of what we've read in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17 that says that ultimately an elder in this role is going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and give an account for the job that they did in shepherding his people.

So the church should honor elders not in the sense that they, you know, salute them when they enter the room, not in the sense that they should bow down to them in any way, not in the sense that they should treat them like royalty, but just simply with respect.

Respect for the position and respect for the responsibilities that come with that position. Paul continues in verse 17 adding that double honor be given especially to those elders who labor in preaching and teaching for the scripture says you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages.

While a qualification of every elder is that they must be able to teach, the assumption here is that some elders will not work as hard at preaching and teaching as others will.

Some elders will teach and preach infrequently while some will do it constantly or consistently and Paul calls the church to support them financially and he uses two Old Testament passages to encourage that.

[ 25 : 38 ] The first comes from Deuteronomy 25.4. God commanded that an ox working to thresh grain was entitled to eat it. The ox shouldn't starve as it worked to produce food for others.

The thought is that if God required that animals, lesser beings, labor to provide physical food for others so that they should be fed, how much more than should men who are in God's image, who are called to serve and lead his church, how much more should they be provided for for the work that they do to feed people the spiritual food they need.

The second quote is from Luke chapter 10 verse 7. A man who labors for others should receive compensation for his work. That's the principle and I'm sure now that you get the idea, I know that you do because Pastor Tyler and I are paid by you for our extra labor that you've entrusted to us to teach, to preach, to lead you in worship of the Lord on a consistent basis.

Thank you for that. Thank you for how well you guys take care of us and for how well you all take care of our families. But unfortunately that's not the case in every church.

there's a saying in churches about supporting pastors, maybe you've heard it, maybe you haven't and it goes something like this. A deacon tells a church and they're talking about the pastor and he says to the church member we'll keep him humble and you keep him poor.

[ 27 : 18 ] Maybe it's the other way around, Monty probably knows, either way that's the kind of joke that hey you know one of ours job is to just keep him humble, the other person's job, the other group's job is to keep them poor.

It's a joke but there's some truth to it and it's not that funny. So I think it's important that we advocate to other Christians again in other churches to take good care of their pastors.

Maybe this looks like for us we consider supporting pastors in other places in other countries whose churches struggle to be able to provide for them financially so that they can labor in preaching and teaching.

Or maybe there's a church planner who doesn't yet have a congregation capable of providing for the needs that they have so that they can spend the time needed to study and to prepare a sermon week after week and to do it well.

Second, the church must honor elders by protecting their reputation. Verse 19, Moses, Joseph, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Paul, the disciples are just a few examples of godly men in the Bible who faced false accusations.

[ 28 : 45 ] Ultimately, Jesus, the Son of God, the God-man, perfectly righteous and sinless, was falsely accused.

To serve as an elder, to lead in the church, is to be marked by Satan. I'm going to say that again.

To serve as an elder, to lead in the church, is to be marked by Satan. That is an unavoidable reality.

Satan knows that if he can discredit or call into question a person's integrity, credibility, and character, he can destroy his ministry, he can damage the church, he can diminish the truth of the transformative power of the gospel in the eyes of those who do not believe.

Paul isn't suggesting that an accusation brought by one person against an elder should be ignored offhand or just outright rejected. The person's accusation should be taken seriously, as should protecting the pastor's reputation be taken just as seriously since they are often the targets of false allegations for the reasons that I've already mentioned.

[ 30 : 12 ] Instead of sweeping things under the rug, the other elders are to investigate the charge by speaking with additional witnesses if there are any.

You know, in our country, we are told that our justice system operates under the principle of innocent until proven guilty. But oftentimes in the court of public opinion, they flip that around, guilty until proven innocent.

In a lot of cases we're seeing today, that even when a person is proven innocent of whatever they were accused of, the public will still find them guilty because they don't like them.

They don't like them, they don't like what they believe, they don't like what they say. In the church, we need to exercise this principle of verifying the truth of an accusation by talking to those who witnessed the event and gathering that whatever evidence there is, if there is any again, so that we protect our elders from being falsely accused.

However, there are some charges where one person was sinned against by an elder without any witness present.

[ 31 : 30 ] Like in the case of abuse, we have our kids here with us this morning, so I think you know what I mean. as Christians, we live under the authority of elders in the church, and the Bible tells us we live under the authority of government leaders who both operate under the authority of God.

In those cases where an elder or any other person in the church is accused of a criminal action, especially abusing a minor, the church has the duty to report, government authorities right away. We're not going to do our investigation first. Now, we're going to use discernment in this, correct? But we're going to take this seriously and we are going to report whatever we've heard to the authorities and entrust that investigation to them because a criminal action has taken place. we've seen how a failure to do this has ruined a lot of people and a lot of churches and our culture today.

Let's not be one of them. We've taken measures to prevent this from happening here, but we can never let our guard down. If you see something, report it.

[ 33 : 04 ] And again, we must use discernment, protecting our pastors, protecting our elders from false allegations, but also making sure that we are protecting our members, that we are protecting our church, that we are protecting and guarding the reality, the truth of the gospel and the Lord's church from those leaders in positions who prey on others.

Now the second principle, the church must protect its members and honor God by rebuking elders who persist in sin. An elder must be above reproach, but that doesn't mean he is above reproaching if he persists in sin.

Now, as Christians, we are all sinners, sinners, saved by God's amazing grace. Sinless perfection is not attainable in this life, so it's important that we understand that our elders aren't perfect people. The persistent sin of an elder refers back to the qualifications of an elder. If an elder persistently sins in ways that defy those qualifications, that make them no longer meet those qualifications, if his behavior is inconsistent with the kind of character that makes him above reproach, then the church must protect its members and honor God by rebuking him.

Why? Paul gives two answers. First, to purify the church. Verse 20, ask for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all so that the rest may stand in fear.

[ 34 : 47 ] In the Greek, rebuke means to expose. This is the opposite of trying to hush things up, thus allowing a sinning elder, an elder who's persistently in sin, barring them from the ability to just leave without explanation and maybe move on to another church where they're just going to continue to do the same things, persisting in the same sins, just in a different location where others will suffer.

And there's no reason to think that this rebuke should only take place in the presence of other elders. I think that's the place to start, but eventually it needs to be brought out and exposed to the congregation.

Otherwise, gossip and rumors spread, which lead potentially to divisions and splits in the church. Now look, no one likes this.

If you like this, then you need prayer. I don't know, we'll talk afterwards. No one likes this. No one is eager to have these kinds of meetings.

But the intention is to purify the church so that the rest may stand in fear. The Greek word translated as the rest is a word that refers to others of the same kind or of the same class.

[ 36 : 17 ] In this case, it refers to other elders. When one elder is publicly disgraced for their persistent sin, it puts a healthy fear into the heart of the others.

And it will also put a healthy fear of God into the hearts of the members of the church. This fear doesn't refer to terror, but rather a sense of God's holiness and how seriously he takes sin and how serious the consequences of sin are.

Now there may be, and hopefully there is repentance expressed on the part of the one who persists in sin, sin, which is making them no longer above reproach.

In that case, we should forgive, but there are still consequences. And one of those consequences is for them to step away for a time or probably permanently depending on the sin, the situation.

There's a lie that I think a lot of churches, a lot of Christians believe today that one sin is as worse as another sin.

[ 37 : 46 ] So please listen to me carefully here to be sure all sin is a violation of God's holiness, an act of rebellion against him. But to say that telling a lie, a little white lie, is as sinful as committing murder is wrong for obvious reasons.

And I think people do this because they diminish, they want to diminish sin and what it is truly and the consequences of sin.

Yes, one sin is all it takes to warrant eternal separation from God, but there is a temptation to restore people in the church, leaders in the church, either too soon or right away because of how many Christians have diminished sin.

Oh, well, they did that. Okay, but everybody sins. So we should just forgive them and just let them go back to doing what they are doing. We see in God's word that that should not be the case.

That we cannot diminish how severe sin is in the eyes of he who is holy.

[ 39 : 11 ] The church needs to decide whether it would rather protect a man's reputation or God's. whether to uphold God's standards or the world's.

And I think the answer to that question is obvious. Second, why do we do this? To prevent the consequences. To prevent the consequences.

In verse 21, Paul gets intense here. He says, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging.

Do nothing from partiality. Paul knows that Timothy may be weary of executing this command.

Again, no one wants to do this, even when it's the obviously right thing to do.

And so here, what Paul is doing is he reminds Timothy that all of heaven, the Trinity, the angels, they are all watching what is going to happen with this situation in the Lord's church.

[ 40 : 22 ] He reminds Timothy of that truth, that heaven is watching you, watching your church, seeing what you will do. So he reminds Timothy that he must do this.

There's no option. Will he fear doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord and the hosts of heaven or will he fear people more in doing what is right in their eyes?

There are consequences for doing the right thing. Some would, maybe, we've seen they have, they will leave the church because they think such a rebuke is too harsh.

And in a way, friends, that also is a purifying act. But the consequences of not doing this, of sweeping things under the rug, are far greater when God's commands are defied to avoid doing what is right.

And so Paul says, the third principle here in verses 22 through 25, hey, this is how you can avoid this point as best as you can. The church must be patient.

[ 41 : 31 ] Be patient in selecting elders. Let me read those verses again. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others.

Keep yourself pure. And then he gives this little side note to Timothy, no longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and for your frequent ailments. So Timothy, he was so focused on his purity, he didn't want to drink any alcohol back then.

They didn't have the medicine that we have today. This was for medicinal purposes. So he says, hey, do it. It's going to help you. It's going to help you with your stomach, with your ailments. That's what he's talking about there.

Then he continues on. The sins of some people are conspicuous going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, even those that are not, cannot remain hidden.

And so what he's saying here is we can't as a church be mesmerized by a man's charisma, especially if he is a recent convert. New converts are often zealous for the Lord.

[ 42 : 36 ] That's good, but it could be that they are like the seed that fell on the shallow soil that sprang up instantly, but then withered in the face of the sun, in the face of persecution.

So the church must take time to examine a man before they set him aside and lay their hands on him to serve as one of its leaders.

Now, Paul doesn't give a specific duration of time. I think sometimes we, that would have been nice, right? How long, Paul? How long should we do this? He doesn't give a specific duration of time, but he mentions that sometimes it's very clear right off the bat that a man isn't fit for the role of an elder because his sins go before him.

His reputation goes before him. You're just going to know and discern right off the bat this man is just not fit. He doesn't meet the qualifications for this role.

Doesn't mean he can't be a member of the church. It means he's not qualified for the role. Not all men are called to serve as elders. In other situations, he says sometimes it's less conspicuous what's going on in this man's life.

[ 43 : 51 ] And so that's why you wait. That's why you examine. And as you see that man interacting with other members in the church, as you see him serving or not serving in the church, as you get to know him and his character, over time it will become more clear to you that maybe the role of leadership is not what this man has been gifted by the Lord to do.

Conversely, he says, also when we give time for those men who are truly humble, for those men who are fit for the role, you'll see that.

Their light can't be hidden from the rest of the church. You'll see them serving. You'll see them maybe teaching a little bit or doing different elder type things, and it'll become more clear over time that man has the gifting to be a leader in this church.

In my experience, the best leaders who are called upon to lead, who are identified by the church, are those who are already meeting the qualifications.

And they should already be meeting the qualifications before they are asked to lead. They are already serving. They're already teaching, maybe in some capacity.

[ 45 : 08 ] They're already living above reproach, and at that point, it just becomes a no-brainer. We see it, and we set that man aside, feels called by the Lord to serve in that role.

So what should we do with all of this? I think just very basically promote biblical eldership. How do we do that? Well, we've already talked about honoring elders. Honor the ones who serve well.

Pray for them. Express your gratitude for them in what they do. Promote biblical eldership by encouraging other Christians and other churches to adopt a biblical model of a plurality of elders.

And let the elders serve with joy as they see your progress in becoming more like Jesus as we hope to be the healthiest church that we can be.

And ultimately, the best elder, the truest elder, pastor, overseer, is Jesus Christ. Jesus who came to serve, to live the sinless life that we couldn't live, to die in our place for the sins that we've committed against God, to rise again on the third day, to share his victory with us, that we would be his church, that we would have eternal life.

[ 46 : 52 ] He is good and he is worthy of following. Friend, if you don't know him, you're lost. You're a sheep without a shepherd.

And I couldn't imagine living in this world without knowing Jesus personally, savingly, without knowing the hope that I have in him, that no matter what happens in this world, he's in control.

Knowing that whatever happens to me, he loves me. And I am in his hand. And he is in control. I hope that you see your need for him, your lostness without him.

He has brought you here today. He is calling to you to turn from your sin, to come to him, to be saved, to have eternal life, to be a sheep of the good shepherd, to be overseen by the Lord of all.

And I pray that today is the day of your salvation. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for good leaders that you have blessed your church with.

[ 48 : 20 ] God, thank you for those men who willingly give of themselves, who give of their time. Those, Lord, who do not receive any kind of financial compensation from the church.

They do it because you've called them to do it and they do it gladly. Lord, thank you for those men whom you've called to preach and to teach on a consistent basis.

Thank you for this church and for those churches who provide and support them so that they can, so that they have the time they need to do the labor to present your word to your people in ways that will feed them and nourish their spirits.

God, thank you for good elders. Lord, thank you for the elders that we have at our church. God, thank you for their desire to obey your word, for their desire to do what is right.

And God, we pray that the time would never come at our church where we have to get to the point where we have to obey these instructions that we've had laid out for us in your word where one would need to be rebuked.

[ 49 : 33 ] But if so, God, that we pray it would never be so. But if so, Lord, may we be people who seek to be obedient to you no matter what the perceived cost may be because we are your bride.

We are your church. We are your light. We are your vessel to promote your truth. And so, Lord, may we fear you and you alone in doing what you command us to do.

And we pray, God, for our church that we will continue to be led well, that we would proclaim the excellencies of who you are well in the hopes that you'll continue to use this church to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen.