

“Why the Church” - Week 9

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Why the Church: Leadership Matters”

Over the past few weeks and months, we have examined some core traits that we want to be known for and function by as a church body here at Rich Fork. These have included: Biblical Preaching, Evangelism & Discipleship, Prayer, Obedient Generosity, The Practices of Baptism & Lord's Supper, Worship, and Fellowship. This week we will look at the core trait of Leadership, according to 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 20. There is a leadership vacuum in our world: globally, politically, in our homes, and yes, in our churches. Biblical leadership is not defined by the ability to stand, speak, or get a group to follow you; it is not the ability to be confident or winsome; servant leadership is difficult to find and maintain. Leaders are those who constantly strive to remain humble instead of famous. Leaders follow the example of Jesus Christ as the ultimate servant-leader but also apply the characteristics outlined by scripture from multiple places. When we stop and consider the calling of a pastor/elder/shepherd (as defined in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), we are stunned by the description of the authority, function, and characteristics of this role in the local church. It is a daunting calling. It is humbling. It is, at times, frightening. But leadership matters. This week we will look at several leadership roles within our church: Elders/Pastor/Shepherd, Deacon, and Congregation.

Scripture - 1 Timothy 3:1-13 (see also Acts 20:17-35 & Titus 1-3)

Qualifications for Elders/Pastors/Shepherds

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Qualifications for Deacons

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study:

Acts 6:1-7, 14:23, 20:17-35; 1 Timothy 3-4; Titus 1-3; Hebrews 13:7; James 3:1; 1 Peter 5

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

Elders: Elder/Pastor/Overseer/Shepherd are used interchangeably throughout scripture

Crucial reminder: Jesus Christ purchased the church by His death and resurrection. The church is under the Lordship of Jesus Christ first and foremost! The church is not lorded over by a pastor or elder board, as if they own the place and/or have done something to claim the church as their own. The Lord has called for the church to have a governing (overseeing) body of elders, based upon specific criteria (1 Timothy 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9); however, we must never forget that the church belongs to Jesus Christ, not any man or group of men. We are His bride! (Colossians 1:15-18)

"Jesus Christ established the church, breathed life into the church, commanded the early followers to embark on this movement, and provided purpose, power, structure, and leadership for the local church. Jesus is in control, and He has the power in the church. Therefore, every leader in the church is accountable to Jesus Christ for their actions and decisions as a leader in the local church." ~ David Platt

Leadership in the local church matters because Godly leadership protects the message and the church, while ungodly leadership destroys both. It is quite evident in the church's history, beginning in Acts 14:23 and especially in Acts 20, that Paul believed in churches having multiple elders within a local church. This role of elder/overseer in the church was significant in the early church and is still just as significant in the local church today.

Elders are to protect the flock (Acts 20:29-31). The early church called leaders to protect the church from false teaching. This role was influential in the early church in its infancy and is ever-growing in importance. Protecting the flock from false teaching is more complex than ever because the field has more gates. This means there are more avenues for false teaching to enter the hearts and minds of those under our leadership.

Elders must nurture the flock (Acts 20:32, 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:9). The position of an elder/pastor/shepherd has a responsibility to equip the church by dispensing the truth of scripture, God's word, into the lives of those in the church. An elder must know the Word of God, love the Word of God, and be able to encourage and discipline from the Word of God.

"The role of an elder involves shepherding by being as well as by doing. Elders serve churches not only by what they do, but also by who they are. And without being, the doing falls apart."

Jermaine Rinne, Church Elders, pg. 101.

Speaking to leadership in his book They Smell Like Sheep, Dr. Lynn Anderson says, "Good spiritual leaders know full well that they are only shepherds, not saviors; they know they are leaders, but not lords; they understand that they may be skillful guides, but they are not gods."

Key Thoughts

Elders must model the character of Christ (1 Timothy 3:2-7). No elder, pastor, shepherd, or overseer in the church is perfect. Paul is not asking for perfection, but he is setting the standards very high on purpose. Why? The character and calling on church leaders are high because the mission is critical. (Lists below taken from pages 130-131 of David Platt's 12 Traits.)

In his personal life...

- Is he self-controlled?
- Is he wise?
- Is he peaceable?
- Is he gentle?
- Is he a sacrificial giver?
- Is he humble?
- Is he patient?
- Is he honest?
- Is he disciplined?

In his family life...

- Is he an elder/leader in his home?
- If he's single, is he self-controlled?
- If he's married, is he ultimately committed to his wife? (A one-woman man.)
- If he has children, do they honor him?

In his social/business life...

- Is he kind?
- Is he a friend of strangers?
- Does he show favoritism?
- Does he have a blameless reputation? (Not perfect, but above reproach.) What would the community think if they knew this man was in leadership in the church? Would it raise their opinion of the church and, therefore, the purpose of the church?

In his spiritual life...

- Is he making disciples of all nations and neighbors?
- Does he love the WORD?
- Is he a man of prayer?
- Is he holy?
- Is he gracious?

Deacons also serve in a very important role, that at times, has greater needs than others. While the descriptions of the two biblical church leadership roles (elder and deacon) are very similar, the functionality is different. Deacons' giftedness, according to Paul, does not have the requirement to preach or oversee the church (as with elders), but that does not mean that deacons cannot preach. The primary role of the deacon is one who supports the elders by helping to serve regarding the needs of the congregation and church body (Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3).

1. Deacons meet needs according to the Word (specific needs within the church body).
2. Deacons support the ministry of the Word (serve elders so that elders can lead the body).
3. Deacons unify the body around the Word (quick to meet needs to keep mission front and center).

There must be a balance of those who are overseers who teach the Word of God (elders) and those who support the elders by serving (deacons) the church and local community. Every leader (elder, deacon, church leader) in our congregation should desire to equip those in attendance to do the work of God's Word and to spread the gospel to the world.

Our desire is that Rich Fork continues to be led by multiple elders and deacons who desire to protect the message and purpose of the church, knowing that the first line of defense is their lives, actions, character, homes, and the view of them in the community. After all, the church and its message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, are worth protecting. Leadership matters!



Reflect & Respond

What leadership structure did you experience within the church as you were growing up? What have you experienced as an adult? Were these biblical according to what you have read in scripture as you have studied the verses provided this week?

Why should church leadership here at Rich Fork (or in any church) matter to you as a church member, group leader, volunteer, or even as a regular attendee of the congregation? What aspect of the call to eldership and deaconship stands out to you most (see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Why is it so important to remember that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd? Read 1 Peter 2:24-25.

What will happen in a church that imitates the leadership described in the passages from this week? What will happen to a church that chooses to not follow this biblical pattern of church leadership? How are elders called to protect the church? See Acts 20:17-38 and 1 Timothy 4.

What role(s) do deacons play in carrying out the mission of the local church? How does their role differ from that of an elder? See Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

Do you aspire to be a leader in the local church? Are you being guided to grow through God's Word? Are you purposefully pursuing to grow in God's Word pertaining to leadership within the local church?

Are you praying for your church leaders? (See Hebrews 13:17-18).

As we work through this series, please know that you have [FREE access](#) to the book Twelve Traits: Embracing God's Design for the Church, by David Platt, which this series is taken from. You can find and download this short book for free at the link below and we encourage you to read through this with us throughout the series

https://radical-net-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/images/20220308095847/12Traits_Web.pdf

