

Church Leadership pt 1

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Take your Bibles and let's go to 1 Timothy 3. I'm going to begin this morning and probably take three sessions to preach on the topic of church leadership. The church elders have felt some time that it's right, appropriate, that we begin praying as a church so take this as a call to prayer that we seek out whom those God has set aside to be elders or overseers in his church. And so this is a multi-week, even a multi-month process, so to speak, and we'll talk about what our policy is for receiving nominations in a few weeks, but they asked me in this process that we've agreed upon, would I re-preach or preach again on the topic of church leadership so we're going to do that and we find a great foundation stone in 1 Timothy 3 because this is a text of the Apostle Paul giving instructions to his associate, Timothy, as to how he's to set up leadership in the new church plants that they have been working to develop together.

Now, the Apostle Paul was just that, he was an apostle. The office of apostle is unique in that an apostle could go to any church anywhere and be God's authority in that church. They were itinerant men and they could go to the church at Philippi, walk in the door and say, "Here's what I want you guys to do. This is wrong over here. This is right. Now you folks over here need to repent and I commend you folks over here for doing good." Now they could just do that and their ministries were attended and attested to by signs and wonders and miracles and it is our conviction that once God completed the Canon of the New Testament, then we have the final authority for the church and the office of apostle has passed away. There is no Cardinal, no Bishop, no Pope, no traveling authority that can come into Grace Life Church or any local church and say, "Now I'm God's authority. You folks have to listen to me." But to carry on the oversight and the leadership of the local churches, the Apostle Paul began first himself and then the task was too large, then he commissioned his associates, Timothy, Titus and others, to go to these churches as they were getting on their feet and maturing and set aside men to be the elders or pastors or overseers, all biblical words for the same office, of these local churches. So that's what we have here, the Apostle Paul giving Timothy the guidelines he's to follow in establishing the pastors in the specific local churches.

Let's look at it together, 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Paul writes to Timothy about this task and he says,

1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

When we talk about local church leadership, we need to remind ourselves that the character or the effectiveness of any local church is directly related to the quality of the leadership. That's why the Scriptures stress the importance of qualified church leadership. The Bible indeed gives specific standards for those in the sacred positions of leadership in his church and what we find as we look across the landscape is that failure to adhere to these standards is the number 1 problem in the church today. As you know, approaching 30 years ago we began Anchored in Truth Ministries and one of our primary visions was to see God develop true churches or biblically healthy churches, and without exception overwhelmingly the issue we see is that leadership is weak if not completely unbiblical in so many churches. The places where I've ministered to just lately would have a fine and solid preaching pastor but the men around him, often they're called deacons and we'll get to that in maybe a later session as to how that's unwise and unhealthy, but the men around him don't even come to the meeting that we're preaching, often don't even come to Sunday church half the time, but they've set themselves up as a board of authority with the pastor if not over the pastor. And then very often it is the case, it is not just the men in the church who are in overseeing responsibility with the preaching pastor, it's the preaching pastor himself who's chasing 1,001 things and expending his energies on 1,001 sometimes good things which ends up minimizing, if not leaving out entirely, the essential things a pastor is to do. Satan is very clever, folks. He's very manipulative, he's very seductive and I have seen, I want to say a million figuratively speaking, a million pastors who were good men but were ineffective because of the pressures, the concerns, the burdens that were placed on them by the people and out of a fear of men they have exhausted themselves in those things because they were not bad things, but they had not the energy to pore themselves into the foundational thing a preaching pastor must do. And so whether it's the men in the church working in oversight with the pastor or the preaching pastor, you can almost always find the glaring weakness in our churches going back to the deficiency in leadership.

I don't have to tell you, I did some study on it the other day and I'm not picking on our Methodist friends. There are some good and godly brothers and sisters in the Methodist, United Methodist denomination, but my, has that whole denomination gone off track. I mean, just the veering away to accommodate, to fit in, to seem relative, to keep up with the liberal progressive notions that has taken over our media and our higher education institutions and in many ways our whole culture. And we see in Baptist life so many men and people in leadership who are trying to accommodate the present culture. Folks, if

Satan can get the church trying to wed itself with the world to be appealing and effective, then the church will be like a dog chasing its own tail all the time. However you slice it, it all goes back to church leadership, often what we might call a dead church, a church that seems devoid of the sweet humble spiritual blessing that I'm convinced in God's grace we enjoy here at Grace Life. But a dead church without the presence of God's Spirit begins to experience strife and conflict and then they say, "What are we gonna do? We've got to do better as a church." So they look to new programs or to other non-essentials when the real problem is that their leaders are spiritually unqualified for the task or their leaders are good men who are pulled into too many things and not doing the main thing in the church.

Now, one statement that I read years ago that's always stayed with me is this: pastors or elders are not essential as to the being of a church. You can have a church without a pastor, do you know that? As a matter of fact, these early churches were that way. The apostle would come through and preach, some people would be gloriously converted, they would begin to meet together and they had no organization yet at all but they were a church. They were God's people studying the word the best they knew how, functioning the best they knew how in their situation, but God doesn't leave a congregation, a new church plant, like that very long. Whereas elders or pastors are not essential to the being of a church, they are very essential to the well-being of the church. They are essential to the health and the maturation of God's local church. As a matter of fact, can I say this for the 100,000th time? It is important that we remember it's God's church and it's to be done God's way for God's glory. We have no right and we have no authority and it is blasphemy beyond compare for us to tamper with God's church when he has given clear truth from the word of God as to how it ought to function. It's not about us. As I've often said, the church is not the deacon's church, it's not the WMU's church, it's not the committee's church, it's not the pastor's church and it's not the denomination's church, it is Christ's church.

Well, Paul as he was outlining for Timothy here, "Timothy, we need to get some pastors in these churches. That's the way God's ordained it to function and to be structured." He said, "Here's what I want you to focus on." And we notice this is very clear as he outlines the pastor's qualifications, that is, that he says, "We're gonna focus on character qualities, not functions or gifts or skills." Not that that's unimportant but character is the most important thing. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our national election was not built on human skills but on true character? What a predicament we find ourselves in in our country as we have devolved and we're on the downgrade as a country to where character no longer matters as long as the person and office can help me personally, but what you find out in every country that goes down that road, they're going to be on decline very soon.

Well, but when it comes to a man to lead in the church, character is more important than function. A man is qualified because of what he is moreso than what he does. As a matter of fact, in 1 Timothy 5:20, Paul continuing to elaborate to Timothy about leaders, he says, concerning this, this is in the context of pastors or leaders, "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning." Now, what's he pointing out here? Now, that's the basic guideline for all in the church who are

involved in unrepented of sin, that is, we don't have a humble spirit. Now listen to your pastor this morning: we always want to be gracious and we always want to be kind and patient with anyone who is struggling with sin because last I checked we all struggle with sin, but what God does require is whatever you're struggling with to have a humble spirit to be willing to at least work on being a repentor and not promoting and living out that sin. Could I get an amen there? Just a heart attitude that says, "I'm willing to humble myself and work at it." If that's your spirit, do you know what we're going to do at Grace Life? We're going to put our arms around you and we're going to love you and help you just like I want you to put your arms around me and love me and help me when I struggle.

But he says here, if a man of all people in the office of pastor or elder continues in a sin, in other words, a pastor can sin, an elder can have a weak moment or season and be called into account and humble himself and repent and in many cases stay in the office of elder. If an elder can't repent and stay in the office, you're not going to have any elders in about three days. Amen? I mean, we all struggle, but if he becomes hardened, if he becomes brazen, if he becomes arrogant and is not willing to repent and do better, he of all people has got to be made a lesson of and that's why he says to bring him before the church and rebuke him before everyone that all the rest of you may know the church is not about a willfully sinning group or organization. Now, what's the point? The point is character really matters in the office of pastor or elder.

Now, how does one know if he is called into this office? Sometimes we use the phrase loosely, how do we know if he's called into this ministry? Well, in the Old Testament very often God just spoke out of heaven. God would send an angel, some supernatural, divine, direct revelation would come. Abraham or Abram as he was called, was in Ur of Chaldees and God spoke and said, "Abraham, leave your people, leave your land, leave all your surroundings and go to the place I'm going to show you." And Abraham was called to a unique role as patriarch and founder, humanly speaking, of the nation of Israel.

In the New Testament as Jesus walked the earth and ministered, men were called because he would go to them directly and he would say, "Leave your fishing nets and come and follow me." And those men in positions of oversight over the rest of the disciples were appointed by Jesus. He prayed all night, the Bible says, and then chose his 12 to be his inner circle, if you will. Spurgeon calls them the elect out of the elect. God elects his children, then he elects his own leaders. By the way, is it not interesting that nobody has any trouble with the fact that God divinely elects his pastors. You don't get to vote on it. You don't get to discuss it. You don't get to walk to the front or anything else. You've got to know God called you out from others to fulfill this office and this role as pastor or elder in the church. But today the Bible teaches us that that's not the way God does it. He's not speaking out of heaven, sending an angel, and Jesus is not ministering in physical form on the earth, today there is the compelling of the Spirit within our hearts, or within a person's heart, if God is calling him to the office.

Notice how he words it here in 1 Timothy 3:1. He said, "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires," something's going on inside of him and he feels drawn to this, he feels

driven to this, "aspires to the office of overseer," then he continues, last part of verse 1, "it is a fine work he desires to do." There is something inside of him that he desires to do it and with the balance of Scripture I think you could come up with these three overlapping but distinct components of how God calls a man out or sets a man apart for this office of elder or pastor.

First one, that man has to have something of an internal drive or compulsion. We'll deal with that more in a moment. I can only talk subjectively, of course about myself, and I remember after my conversion the long long hours I would spend with my Bible open, with a burning in my heart. I mean, I'm converted at age 19 from an agnostic home life and you cannot explain why all of a sudden, bingo, I have this desire to study the Bible and this burning desire for others to understand it. I thought, "This is just too wonderful. Other folks gotta know this." And I couldn't turn it off and so that drive was there and it's kind of interesting because immediately, the first few months after my conversion, I had no real thought about being in the office of pastor or church staff member, for that matter. I thought I'll be a businessman and I'll be successful but I want to be involved in helping God's work and supporting God's work and I'll just be involved in ministry that way. And by the way, God calls a lot of businessmen to do that and that's good, as a matter of fact, that's wonderful. But God made it increasingly clear that for my particular calling, it was to be a preaching pastor. Not all pastors in the church, not all elders, are supposed to be the preaching pastor but God does call some and get them that way. So there has to be that internal drawing and desire where they're just looking for the opportunities for more counsel, more training, more mentoring. "I want to be involved in this class. I want to be involved in that." It's just in them.

Secondly, not only that desire, secondly, there are the qualifications. One can have all the drive and all the desire in the world but – now listen to what I'm going to tell you – that's secondary to whether or not your character qualifies you. The last thing we need is another powerful gifted man in the pulpit whose character is questionable, and that's why the Apostle Paul in this text lays out the character qualifications.

So the inward desire, the character, and then thirdly, based on those two, the confirmation of God's church. Now, this can be questionable if a church is very carnal and full of unsaved or unregenerate people and there's a lot of that out there, but as a church body matures and grows, the church body itself will just kind of sense, "That guy has a unique calling on his life. That man just seems to have..." It doesn't mean he's more godly, by the way, he has to be godly but not moreso than 100 other men in the church, but he just has a calling on his life that just looks different. Someone said an anointing is a special touch for a specific task. Without hopefully not complicating things too much, I think there is an anointing for men to serve in certain places that's unique and different from just God's calling. I really believe with all of my heart in the providence and sovereignty of God, God gave me a special touch for the specific task of pastoring Grace Life Church and leading Anchored in Truth Ministries. I just believe that. It's not me. It's not special gifting. As a matter of fact, I have weaknesses and vulnerabilities and struggles that I would think disqualify me in many ways, but God has given me, I'm convinced in unmerited favor, not deserving on my part, a special touch for a specific task. Well, in a

general way, a man in the office of elder has the Spirit of God working on him and he's distinguished himself in a humble, selfless devotion in the body and his teaching and his leading is in such a way that the church family, generally speaking, just in their hearts says, "That man looks like elder material."

So there is the inward desire, the biblical qualification and the body affirmation. All are required for a man to serve in the office of elder.

Now, well, I've already said that. I'm not going to say that again. That's introduction. So this is going to be several parts. Let's go to number 1 in our outline: it's an important calling. It's an important calling. The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy begins with an interesting phrase, where in the New American Standard he words it this way, "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do." But that phrase, "it is a trustworthy statement," is a weighty statement. That phrase is used five times in the Apostle Paul's writings and each time it introduces something of very great importance.

For example, in 1 Timothy 1:15, he speaks of a foundational issue, a foundational truth in the Christian church. Let's look at it real quick, 1 Timothy 1:15, and he brings the same way there where he says, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." So that is a foundational axiomatic truth. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. That is a trustworthy statement. Now, he links or he connects the calling to the office of elder with the same kind of preface, "It is a trustworthy statement," in other words, that God is putting this in men's hearts. They are being drawn by the Spirit of God with an internal drive and an external aspiration to this office.

So it's axiomatic. The call to be an elder is a foundational and fundamental truth for God's local church. It's an extremely important calling. It is both lofty and honorable. It is a sacred task. In fact, I would say if you're a man that God is calling to this office, one of the very first and persistent feelings that you'll have in your heart is, "O God, I am not worthy." If you're cocksure of yourself, then you're probably not called or at least you're not ready.

Now, in the early church when they used this phrase, "it is a trustworthy statement," people stood up and paid very close attention, so here it encourages men in the church to think seriously and pray hard is this something God's putting on your heart to do. Now I might add again, it has nothing to do with popularity, it has nothing to do with human skills and abilities, it has nothing to do with a representative form of government, "Well, our group needs somebody on the elder body." None of that, it's God's call. Sometimes he calls men to this position that you wouldn't think he'd call. Sometimes, and I think as a church matures, he makes it very obvious to the body as it goes along.

When you see the progression, the chronology of the early church maturing and becoming established, we begin to see starting in Acts 14 the profile of God-called elders or pastors in the New Testament church. For example, in Acts 14:23, it said, "When they

had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." So here we have the apostles again, and by the way, in the New Testament example, it's overwhelmingly that the apostles and their associates appointed the elders in the church. Now, very venerable and reputable and good men to pattern your ministry after like John MacArthur, still follow this pattern. In John MacArthur's church, you know, he's the author of "The MacArthur Study Bible," and I think the best preaching pastor in America today, the elders of the church always and only appoint the future elders for the church. That's not our position. We are more congregational than that. We want the body to have significant input though the elders do examine and look for the qualifications etc., but that's John MacArthur's position and many other good men that we would admire. They would have the congregation to pray, the congregation could certainly give suggestions or, I guess in a sense, make a nomination, but it's the elders' responsibility to appoint new elders just as the apostles and their associates appointed the elders in the early church.

Now, one thing I'd like to say about the title for this office. There are three different words the Bibles uses for this one office. We use different words. Sometimes we use the word "pastor." Somehow through the years I've become to a lot of people, the pastor. They don't mean we don't have other pastors, but they just mean I'm the senior pastor or the preaching pastor. They'll call me the pastor. I have some people that I've worked with, some people at the church that call me the preacher. "Hey preacher." And it's a title of respect. I read with a little humor that in Charles Haddon Spurgeon's church in London, as you know, Spurgeon is highly esteemed among Baptists of antiquity, and Spurgeon's church affectionately referred to him as the governor. He was called the governor. He had other elders, other pastors, he was the governor.

So there are lots of titles and things we throw around. That's not good or bad. It's okay either way, but the Bible gives three specific terms for this one office and it denotes the different types of responsibilities in the office. For example, sometimes he calls them elders and that's the word "presbyteros." We get the word "presbyterian" from it. And the word "elder" refers to the spiritual maturity that's required of a person in this office.

Another word that's used is the word "bishop" or "overseer," and "bishop" is not a good translation because denominations have made the word "bishop" mean some sort of hierarchy person who has authority over a number of churches. That's not the biblical New Testament example. It just means "overseer" and that's the word "episkopos." We get our word "episcopalian" from it and it means "the leadership authority; the oversight that that person has in that office."

So he needs to have spiritual maturity and he's to function with an authority and as an overseer. He is the presbyteros and he is the episkopos. Then there's a third word "poimen." Poimen is a very simple husbandry term, it just means "shepherding." They would have used this term about a guy who keeps the sheep and does a good job of it out there in the fields. He just tends to and takes care of and looks after. He protects them. He makes sure they're fed. Poimen. Now in Baptist circles, that's the one we've hung onto the best and it's a good word but it's not the only biblical word and there is no biblical reason

to only have that word so you could rightly refer to any of our elders, including myself, as an elder, an overseer or a shepherd or a pastor. Three main terms, presbyteros, episkopos and poimen representing the maturity, the oversight and authority, and the shepherding nature of this office in the church.

Now, it's our conviction that there are only two offices in the church: there is the office of overseer or pastor or elder, whatever word you want to choose, that's one office; and then there is the office of deacon and these are very very different and distinct offices. The pastors of the church are primarily responsible for the ministry of the word, establishing church polity, church doctrine and church direction. The deacons in the church serve the body. The word "deacon" comes from "table serving." They just make sure that busy work and ministry needs are cared for, primarily so that the ministry of the word can go forward unhindered.

I'm a blessed man here that I have deacons and scores of men who do 1,001 important jobs so that I can pore my heart into preaching and that's such a blessing because after 36 years, without question I would have already left you and been burnt out had I not had that. No question and I'm just saying this to prove a point. I'm convinced I can do a lot more work than most men can do. I think that's been proven in my ministry, however, had God not given us the team of men through the years, I wouldn't have made it 36 years. Would not have made it. And God help us in our churches today to raise up godly men in the church congregation who will handle the 1,001 other good things so the preaching pastor will be free to reserve his energy for the one thing that must be done with excellence, the preaching of the word of God. But that's not what we see. Do you know what I see in churches? I'm chasing a rabbit here but it's my pulpit, I'll chase it if I want to. What I'm seeing in churches, instead of the deacons getting together to say, "Pastor, we're gonna cover this need and that need. We're gonna take care of these widows. We're gonna take care of this hospital visit. We're gonna counsel these people." As a matter of fact, I've done a couple of funerals lately. I'm blessed to do those ministries but I don't have to do them all anymore. But instead of deacons doing those things for their preaching pastor, the deacons get together and think up jobs for the pastor to do as if they're some sort of board of directors and he's their hireling.

I'll never forget and I'm not preaching this to you, but we have a lot of pastors and a lot of church leaders that listen to us on the internet and on our broadcast so I say a lot of things for them. But I forgot what I was going to say. I'm going to go on.

Two offices, the elder who is the overseer, primarily concerned around the ministry of the word, and deacons who serve, meeting needs in the body to free up the ministry of the word. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 teach us very clearly but he says to the church at Thessalonica here, "we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction." Here we see the varying aspects of their job. They diligently labor, there is a lot of work to what they do. They have authority over you and a main part of their work is giving you instruction, that's of course from the Scriptures. Then he says, "that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work." And that phrase "because of their work" means this

is and this is our main point we're building under, the high importance of the job they're doing and the role that they have. He says to highly esteem them because they have an important and diligent job to perform.

Now in Hebrews 13:17 elders are held accountable to the Lord for their guardianship of the people, therefore the people are exhorted to obey them. "Obey your leaders and submit to them." Why? The importance of their job, "they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Then in 1 Peter 5:1-4, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." So here the elders are exhorted to be godly examples and to function with proper motives. Why again? Because of the importance of this calling.

This is not to be taken lightly and I would beseech you as we're praying say, "O dear God, make it very very clear, may this be a sweet, peaceful, harmonious time as you identify..." Listen, the process of appointing elders in the church is not us doing something, it's us discerning something. We're discerning whom God has called to the office, not whom we are going to put in the office.

I'll get on this a lot more in the next message or two but in our experience through the years, we have had many, and I mean many men that I just knew ought to be in the office of elder who in privacy told us, "Brothers, I'm thankful that people would nominate me but I just do not need to be serving in the office of elder in the church." And we didn't devolve into why. They may have had a struggle, they may have a difficulty, or they may just feel, "I'm not led to do it." I don't know. Maybe 1,001 things and that's their personal business, amen? We don't need to publish any of that but I'm very grateful that at least those men I thought they were good elder material said, "This is not what I'm supposed to do. I'll serve as a deacon. I'll lead a small group. But I don't feel led to function in that office." A number of good men have done that and I have the privilege of being the preaching pastor, the senior pastor of a church where – and I mean this with all of my heart – we have so very very many men who as far as the qualifications, qualify. I mean, we just do but are they the ones God means to have in that role, that's the question.

Well, let me go to this second point and we'll end with this for this morning. It is a limited calling. Paul makes it very clear to Timothy that it's an important calling but, secondly, it is a limited calling. He says there is verse 1, "It is a trustworthy statement," here's the phrase, "if any man." Now that's not the generic word for "mankind." The generic word for "mankind" is used a lot in the New Testament and it includes male and female, but here the gender in the original Greek is masculine. It can only mean a male person. God does not call women to the office of elder in the church. That's what the

Scriptures teach. Folks, listen to your pastor, as long as I'm here, we're not going down that road. We're not following the popular contemporary trends of this godless, unbiblical, secular, progressive movement. We're not going down that road. We'll accommodate what we can accommodate but when it comes to leadership in the church, we're going to do what the Scripture says. It is very very clear it's a limited calling for men only. As a matter of fact, the descriptive qualifications in verses 2 through 6 only use the male gender pronoun "he" or "him," affirming again it's only for men.

Now, God gives women important roles and important ministries but God does limit the kind of roles or offices women are to function in in the church and certainly an office of authority is not an office God has given to women in the local church. Now, women have the wonderful privilege of influencing the next generation in ways men cannot fathom and as women pore their hearts and lives into their homes and into their children, they have an impact that is beyond compare for the glory of God. It just so happens that we live in a culture and in an age – now listen to me – that because of rebellion against God, women are pushed, manipulated and shamed into abandoning God's wisdom of putting their homes first in their heart and their children first in their heart and embracing an unbiblical and weaker and less wise role of achieving something out in the world. Listen to your pastor this morning: I'm not saying it's absolutely sin for a woman to have an occupation outside of her home, but listen to me, when a woman abandons the home, you cannot hire anyone to take care of the babies the way momma can. It's just not going to happen. Now, I have the greatest compassion and the greatest heart of sympathy for ladies who are wrestling with both worlds and, by the way, we've had ladies who have proven to be super women; they seem to have done a wonderful job and been able to maintain both. But I hope without legalism, without judgmentalism if that's a word, without a condemning spirit, we encourage our younger ladies, "Ladies, God may have this for you to do, he may have that for you to do, but he has called you to put your home first in your hearts. And don't you be ashamed, don't you listen to the lies of this world." I'd much rather have a godly mom teaching babies at home...I'm not going to say that. Ladies, don't diminish the wisdom of God and the great importance God's called you to. Don't diminish it, glory in it. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. A lot of truth to that.

But the office of authority either in the home or in the church is not a role that God has given for women. Women need to have the spiritual character and maturity and the wisdom to understand the greatness of the role that God has called them to. Now, no one in the slightest way has come to me and said, "Pastor, could we nominate a woman for the office of elder?" We don't have that spirit here but it certainly is in our culture and so I wanted to make it clear where we stood on that.

Paul so far has said, "Look, this is an important calling," so, church, pray. Seek God. Say, "O God, would you make it apparent?" It may be one man, it may be five. As elders as we pray. We don't have the final word on that. Now, certainly it tends to reason that you don't need 45 men in that office but we do feel like that God's probably wanting to add some younger men to this group and one of the reasons is there is a lot to being an elder in this church. You need to grasp and have participated in the biblical concepts of conflict

resolution. You need to be able to grasp and have functioned in all the biblical dynamics of biblical church discipline. You need to grasp and have functioned in what is essential and sound doctrine in the church. What does true conversion look like? What is a true and biblical understanding of evangelism? There are many things that many bridges we've crossed through the years and we're now on the other side functioning and to be a man who can lead in the church and oversee, it would be understandable that these type things are already things he has experience with. He's not a novice or not a young convert, as Paul would say here.

And if you were in a church plant and everybody there had only been there a year or two or three and you were considering elders, the qualification wouldn't be all that high. You say, "Wait a minute, pastor, there is only one qualification." Yeah, the character qualification but the church is just beginning to learn all those things I just talked about so those elders would be learning with you. But once God brings a church to function in those things, you would expect God to put men on the elder body who have walked those things and believe in them and can carry on the church and not pull the church back from obedience in those areas.

Well, we'll talk about more of that in the future. So be praying. We'll seek the Lord and one thing we know for certain, God will take care of his church.

Let's stand together in prayer, alright?