

Leadership Part 2

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Well, thank you again. And I would emphasize that you must look up the Bible texts. I know it is tedious, but because I only have, you know, two hours I skimmed and skimming, as I said at the beginning, is no good. You need to look at them, think about them read them. I did that this week. I looked up every text from your handout. I must admit that I did sleep for two hours in between looking at the texts as I got in my comfortable chair. So it does really demand discipline. I should have sat in my hard chair.

But there were are. It is a... but I would urge you to do it, perhaps, tomorrow afternoon as you think about it, particularly if you are thinking about leadership. You need to be sorted out regarding what a local church is and how it is governed.

Right. We are going to look at leadership in action now and the sort of leadership is servant leadership as we have seen. It demands putting those served before yourself and before your position. It demands being like Timothy. I love Paul's description of Timothy, if you would start by turning to that in Philippians two and 19.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no-one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.¹

Timothy, you see, was concerned for other people. Again, that is a mark of servant leadership in the Church that you are concerned not for your own interests, but for others.

Now then, men, this is quite difficult. You need to learn skills that you probably don't have. It is sometimes said that taciturn and shy men the only time they feel bold enough to say anything is when they get in the pulpit and the rest of the time they spend looking at their feet or waiting for their wives to speak to the stranger. Well, I would like that as a 20 odd year old, but my wife will much the same. So we are neither of us spoke. But it is no good. If you are going to be interested in people, you have got to get out there. I had

¹ Philippians 2:19-22.

to discipline myself. I am still not good at shaking hands. I don't like shaking hands, but I do go there. You know, and I am not good at looking them in the eye. I have learned to look them in the eye and to ask their name, but being a man I can't do all three things at once. So I can manage to shake their hand and look in the eye, but I can never remember what the name is, because it takes so much discipline and effort to overcome my natural shyness to do those things that I can't remember the third thing. But you need to be less... Some of you will be gregarious and chatty and salesman type men. Well, you are ok. You need to just control your salesman's energy. But a lot of us need that idea of Timothy to be genuinely interested in the welfare of others which overcomes your own whatever your hang-ups that you want to serve other people so much that you would learn new skills.

Now when I started to preach I never looked people in the eye and I got criticized for that, too. And I had to learn to look people in the eye. When you are saying things that are painful and you know they are not going to like, you want to look here. You want to say it and hope you are not going to see them shaking their head or going bright red or looking negative.

A preacher does notice how you respond and when people look negative or shake their heads or look as black as thunder, it is quite discouraging, so the thing to do is when you are listening or particularly if you are positive, look positive.

Anyhow, that was an aside. We see leadership in this idea of Timothy on two fronts. Paul in prison is in great need, but he is willing to part with Timothy for the good of others. And Timothy has been like a son to him. You know, he is willing to part with Timothy and Timothy has concern for those he serves.

So in this talk I want to look at the identification of leaders. What do you look for in others and yourself? How to exercise leadership. How to train them in some ways. And, finally, the things to avoid, because abuse is so common. What do you look for, then? When groups draw up lists for leaders, how often do they approach it in looking? They usually look at what they can they do for the Church. Well, the New Testament method is to look at character. What are they as a person, first and then what the gifts are. What are they as a person?

You remember that Paul writes to Timothy and Titus about the only leaders churches have which are elders. And the elders are used interchangeably with pastors and overseers. You see there is a document there in your book that I wrote for the church when we were just planting and organizing our church on elders and deacons. It is most important you look at that, because elders work together as a team. And I want you to also remember character. I want to use the cooperative advertising jingle. It was more common last year, but I did hear it this week. You know, the coop is good with... do any of you know that jingle? The coop is... None of you know it? Food. Yes, that is it. Yeah, it is. That is most common time. But he uses the good with advert for others. So I am using it. What is the Christian leader to be good with? Well, they are to be good with self control.

You turn to 1 Timothy three. We will have it in front of us. He says self controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach. His character shows soberness in Titus, discipline, gentleness, is not quarrelsome, not overbearing, not quick tempered. Now then that is the great challenge, isn't it? These days soberness would exclude you, oh misery. You know sober. When you say someone is sober it is a way of criticizing them and of running them down. You know, if you were looking on a dating site for a wife and you put down, "John, very sober," they don't put that, do they? They put good sense of humor, loves fun. And that is our society. Soberness is considered, actually, something that is wrong. But you need that self discipline, that seriousness. You are dealing with the souls of men who are going not perish unless you preach the gospel to them. And hell is an awful thing. There is nothing fun about hell or sin.

And not quarrelsome, not overbearing. That was ... we will look at that text in Peter in 1 Peter five, because I think that is a game. Peter, you know, he was the... you could say he was the lead disciple, the impetuous one. And yet he writes:

"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder..."²

No using apostolic authority here. It is the ongoing leadership as the church's elders.

"...a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing..."³

And the elders defines the office, the overseer defines what they do.

"...overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."⁴

It is very important in leadership you are modeling what it is like to be a godly Christian. So if you never talk to strangers as a leader, why should anybody else in your congregation? If you are unfriendly and brusque as a leader, why should your congregation be smiling and welcoming to new people? As leaders you have got to model that smiling, oh it is good to see you. And go and talk to them, even if it is hard.

So there we are. Not overbearing. I have read that out, because the brother pointed that. Good with integrity, upright, not pursuing dishonesty gain, not greedy for money, eager to serve. Good with family, above reproach in the sexual sphere. A man who if he is married has already demonstrated Christ like service by caring for his wife and discipline for his children.

² 1 Peter 5:1.

³ 1 Peter 5:1-2.

⁴ 1 Peter 5:2-3.

When I say about leadership in our congregation, I say, “Men, if you are going to marry, you have all got to be leaders so you have all got to be trained.” Because you have. And they say, “I can’t pray.” I say, “Why it is no good. You can’t get married.” You as a Christian have got to lead your family. You have got to read the Scriptures. You have got to pray. You have got to serve your wife. You have got to look after her. You have got to develop her. You have got to discipline your children. And so as a Christian you need to be filled with the Spirit and get on with it. And I am trying you to do it so you will have to pray.

Now you women are free not to do any of those things, because you are women. You can pray. But you don’t have to. But, men, it is not an option for you unless you are going to stay single and that is ok. And most of you don’t want to do that, because you have to believe. That is what the Scriptures say. When you get married that is what you are taking on. It is an awesome business. It is no wonder that most of us men shake all over at the thought of getting married because it is a responsibility.

So when you are looking for church leaders, if you have got married men there, the first thing you should ask is how does he treat his wife. And look at that. How does he treat his wife?

Now to many Christian man, sadly—and I have never been able to get some of them out of it. In spite of teaching on servant leadership to many Christian men they assume that their wife’s responsibility to obey gives them a carte blanche to be oriental monarchs in their own homes and all they are like is the {}, but they have a {} just there, probably {}.

And yet, you see, what you need to focus on is, is there any evidence of tender, self giving love? Is that man seeking to nourish his wife in such a way so that she flowers and develops as a Christian woman? Not representing her or competing with her, but wanting her to flower as the Christian woman as a result of his love and care and looking after her.

Now if he is doing that in his home, he is the sort of man you ought to think about. If he is bossy and impossible to live with at home, it would be like that in the church, because that is the way he exercises authority. Give him the authority and he will treat you and the church like he treats his wife. So think about that. It is a very interesting thought. And churches don’t look at that.

Now how do you gain insight into this? Well, if you know the people, you have probably already gained insight and certainly your wife will have gained insight so you could ask her if you are a leader thinking about someone else. But what you could do, men, if you really are wanting to test whether you are called to be a leader—and I don’t know how many of you would be brave enough to do that—you could go home and ask your wife and say, “How much of Ephesians five do you see in me?” I wonder whether you would.

Now she may be so under your thumb that she would give you the right answer, “Oh, you are wonderful, my dear.” But most ladies might take it as an opportunity to dismember you. And it might not help your marriage. But, Christian ladies, if your husband did ask you, concentrate on the positive things first, before you deal with the things you would like to change, because we men are delicate creatures and do need to be encouraged.

But something that encouraged me recently, another way of getting insight which isn't quite so risky to your marriage is to ask your son or daughter if they are in their late teens or older how they see you as a Christian father. And it may be positive. You know, I was about negative about the ladies. The ladies, hopefully, would be positive, because they have developed a spiritual way of seeing things and they would love you and so wouldn't want to destroy you. So it was cynical of me to say they would dismember you. But children again it needn't be negative. There was a really lovely thing happened to me recently in my congregation. I asked a young man in his early 20s. He had only been a member about a year and he was about to marry and I said, “How are you going to order your home and family worship?” And he said, “Well I have learned so much from the way that my mom and dad did things. I am going to try and do what they did.”

Now that was really good and the year before when he had become a church member, I didn't know his dad until the wedding. When he became a church member and gave his testimony, it shined through with love and care that both his mom and dad had showed him, wise counsel. His dad had agonized over him as a wayward teenager, even as a Christian and kept him on the rails and brought him up well. And he testified to that. Now that really was encouraging.

Now if that man was in our congregation, that sort of positive testimony would make you think of him as a leader, because he has done well. And the young lad is doing well as a Christian. So they are good with family, good with outsiders, above reproach, hospitable, humble, good reputation with outsiders. What is he like at work? That is a good thing to ask, good with doctrine. In most eldership, group leadership situation a man needs not to be a new convert, not to be disorganized doctrinally. He needs to be able to teach the Scriptures.

Now that doesn't mean... I don't think he necessarily needs to preach. I became an elder before I ever felt able to preach, but I was able to teach the Scriptures in a one to one and Bible study wide. You don't have to preach. But you do need to be able to teach and handle the Scriptures in a way that applies them to your situation. So you need to know them. You need to know what you believe and be able to teach it and refute error. Very difficult to do and most congregations and Christians are absolutely unsympathetic with dealing with error. It is very difficult to preach on, very difficult to teach on. But you need not be able to do it.

Titus says you must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that you can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. So that is the character to look for. We have seen that, good with self control, with integrity, with

family, with outsiders, with doctrine. How to exercise leadership. How do you develop it and exercise it?

Well, the first thing is that you have the apprenticeship model in Scripture. You work alongside others doing the work. And the other thing that you can do throughout your reading of Scripture is to observe how other leaders have operated in Scripture. That is what we are going to look at now. The apprenticeship model observed from Scripture. There is no evidence of the college model in Scripture. It is the local church's responsibility to train its leaders. Now I don't object to going away and studying Hebrew, Greek, theology, you know, those sort of things. But that doesn't make you an elder. It is within the local church congregation. It is good you can learn all sorts of things that will make you good with doctrine. That is good. But it won't free you. Local churches need to be responsible for training their elders and seeing them work together as a team. Most college models work on the pastor, the elders, the deacons. They have got a hierarchy of rank. You remember Christ, all the members and the elders supporting the members in their walk with Christ and their service.

Now you work alongside others. Now this is very important in training, because you see, if you have a new elder, you bring him into a group and he works alongside and you ... he has got other people to monitor him and mentor him and help him. He is not suddenly thrust there all on his own and he either sinks or swims. You see this with the apostle Paul in Acts 20. He traveled with a whole team of people. He never worked on this own. And the apostle Paul was a very dynamic and tremendous preacher and teacher, wasn't he? His letters were phenomenal and as he never was on his own apart from that time he was a bit nervous in Athens. At lastly he went around {?} and that trained. He trained Timothy like that. They learned the job by being next to Paul and listening to him. And Paul also wrote to Timothy that he was to do the same thing, if we look at 2 Timothy.

We have found this very challenging as a congregation and the new full time elder that followed me has been much more faithful and diligent in seeking to do this than I ever was. He says in 2 Timothy one and verse 13:

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.⁵

And then he says in 2:2:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”⁶

That is the job, you see. Timothy has had the training alongside Paul and he has got to train other men so that they can train other men so that they can train other men and so it goes on until the Lord returns.

⁵ 2 Timothy 1:13.

⁶ 2 Timothy 2:2.

Secondly, under the apprenticeship model every description of leadership in the New Testament points to it. Elders are always plural.

Now you may say, “Well, it can’t... we may not have enough. We may not have anybody.” And you may say, “Oh, well, it was different times.”

But look at Acts 14. These churches hadn't been going very long and yet what did Paul do? Did he appoint bishops, archbishops, set up an episcopacy? What he did, well he did, but it was a local one. What he did in verse 23 of Acts 14 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders, plural, for them in each church and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust.

So when he went back he actually organized the local churches as I would urge you to organize every other local church until Christ comes again with local elders who lead it in a group. How many you have? Well, it doesn't say. You will have as many as are needed or God gives you, but it is good to have more than two, really, because the group works better that way, but two is better than one.

So this is a team model and it is not the pastor in charge with 90 percent of the vote, as it were, and the elders underneath him as various helps and dog's bodies and assistance. This model of team... I have promoted this since 1970. I have done it in my own congregation, or we have done it in our own congregation. We have always had a multiple eldership apart from when death has taken somebody away and we have had times where we have actually waited upon someone else. But since the 70s just scorn has been heaped upon me. I haven't usually taugth on it publicly because of the scorn, because most men don't want the discipline of working within a team or don't have the skills to do so. They want to be the pastor.

We had one man that came to us and said... he had not eldership material, but he said, well, he wanted to be the boss elder. He said that to us. Now he said, “Well, we are sorry. We are just not into boss elders.”

He said, “Well, on a horse there has always got to be somebody that has the reigns to make the horse go and I want to be the one that holds the reigns.”

And we said, “Well, yeah, and we agree that to do a task, you need a lead man, but it doesn't always have to be the same man's hands on the reigns.”

It doesn't mean to say the group isn't organized with strong leadership that one person does one thing and the other person does another. That is how we do it as elders. We have a sphere of responsibilities and, you know, you follow the elder that is responsible, say, for the Wednesday meeting. If you are {?} and said, “Can I come and preach at your Wednesday meeting?” when I was a full time elder I would say, “Well, I will have to ask the elder that does that, because I am submissive to him.” It is not just me that does it, because it was his responsibility.

And so you have got to look at this. Counter this idea of amongst men that they must be the boss or the pope even in a local Baptist situation.

And you see it over and over again in Baptist churches, a powerful man in charge, perhaps the only person who ever challenges him is his wife and anybody that differs from him is out through the door. That is not the way to exercise leadership.

Now to have to work in a team, then, I say, is essential to servant leadership, because in that team you, as a leader, have to submit graciously and follow somebody when you have got something differently. And recently that happened twice in our own congregation to me. The lead elder wanted to do something I wasn't really keen. I was reluctant and cautious and I tend to be. And he taught well on it, led well on it and convinced us. We, as a church, he felt, were getting too full and we needed to buy somewhere else and I was daunted at the thought of it and he taught on it and looked for a place and we found a cottage hospital that has come up onto the market. They asked 900,000 for it and I relaxed because I thought we would never raise that money. And then we did and we put a bid in. You could pray for us. The bid goes in this week. We have bid 658,000 pounds for the site and we need another 250,000 spent on it to make it so we can make it in the center of our town. It is big, you know, it would do for the rest of the time until the Lord comes again in our town. But he did that. He led well. And the church was even more reluctant than me and yet on Tuesday night this week 37 turned up and 37 voted in favor. So God was good. He has shown leadership and we are fellow elders, some of us that, you know, have been dragged without... it has been good for me to see that he had a vision and leadership skills and I had to submit to that.

The other experience recently has been very much more painful and challenging when you differ from another elder and they take a different line and you have got to grind your teeth or come to terms with it and you have got to ask yourself: Why are you so upset? The answers are often not very helpful, because they might reflect your own sinful heart.

So that is a joint leadership is essential for you to develop leadership skills and to know what it is like to be led. And there is often great fun in being led. Again, I would tell this story that I used to lead a children's camp and I had to do everything. And I was about, you know, you ran it, you talked and so on. And then I went to another children's camp where I was just a speaker. And I just had to do as I was told. Now I enjoyed that second camp much more. When all the problems came up, when people fell out and the kids fell out of trees and so on, I would go to the leader and say, "Here it is. I am just a creature." And that is good, isn't it? What I mean is it is a different role. And he was a wise leader did it. He did a beautiful good job leading that camp and I was submissive to him. And so it is that sort of team leadership we need to develop.

And then you observe in Scripture how the work is being done. You see Moses, for instance. He is an awesome example, isn't he? Really awesome. His rule of a nation. He was a religious leader. He was a priest. He was a prophet. And yet he was noted for his humility. Remember how it is put in Scripture. Now Moses was a very humble man,

more humble than anyone else on the earth, on the face of the earth. And the evidence of that was his initial reluctance. He put up with it, 40 years of continual complaint and challenge to his leadership. And when God said, “Get out of the way, Moses, and I will burn them up for you,” now what would you have said? You know, as a Yorkshireman, I would have said, “Right, Lord. Let me stand out. This is just what I was thinking of,” because sometimes you {?} angry, aren’t you, when things are like that? But Moses didn’t. He pleaded, not just once, but twice more times. No, no. Your honor, your glory. They are your people. Courage and conflict he showed. He is a brilliant example. And yet the awesome thing for leaders is that he fell and he fell in such a nitpicking way, didn’t he?

Have you thought of that? Just God said, “Speak to the rock.” His sister has just died so he is feeling raw. And the people are complaining yet again and again. And he said, “You rebellious lot, bang, bang,” and the water comes. And God said, “I am not pleased with you.”

Now would any church have been upset with the man? Because the water came. Didn’t it? The miracle happened. How can you be nitpicking when the miracle has happened? But he didn’t do it as God said and he died. But he went to glory. It must have been much better than going to the Promised Land.

You see how it really concerns to fully obey. That, you know, that makes me all {?}, does Moses hitting the rock. It is so often I am... as a person I am impatient of detail. I like the big picture. I don’t like the nitpicking.

And then you consider Joshua. I like Joshua. He has been a tremendous encouragement to me. He has been Moses’ right hand man trained in the team role, leadership role. He was an assistant, really. It is a more mediator thing than I have got before you. And just at the crucial time when they were about to cross the river Moses goes up a mountain and dies and he leaves them. And God comes to him and says, “Look, Joshua. You have got to be strong and courageous. As I was with Moses, I will be with you.” He had God’s promise. “As I promised to Moses so I am promising to you.” He had God’s promise of the Promised Land. And he said, “Look, you are to be strong and very courageous as you lead this people.” And how was he to manage it? What was he to do? He was a very busy man leading millions of people and you would think, “Well, how could he manage to do the job?” And look what God said again. Verse seven of chapter one.

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.”⁷

Now I like that. An overall view of the law and general obedience towards it, but he goes on in a way that I find hard. He says:

“...do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.”⁸

⁷ Joshua 1:7.

You have to walk down the narrow line of what God's Word said, not deviating to the right or to the left. Not approximating. You have got to have conviction. You might not be always right, but they can't be too worried in the sense ... if the Scripture speaks you have got to try and grapple with what it says. And he had to do it. And in order to do it, listen. Look up. He was buy. Whatever are you to do next? Well, he had to know it.

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.”⁹

And then the final thing that encouraged him was the people said, “Look, all that we want from you, Joshua is that you are strong and courageous and we will do the work. And anybody that differs from you, we will polish them off.” That is how is the old covenant approach to leadership.

But that is Joshua, you see. Lots to learn there. The king had to ponder the Scriptures so that they were applied. We at elders are at our job as leaders and you that are fellowship with leaders is to apply the Scriptures to your situation. The first thing you always must ask is: What does the Bible say about this issue? What are the principles? How do I need to apply it? And that is what these were to do.

And so, you see, another example even more brilliant is Nehemiah, isn't it? A most remarkable character, a slave of a despotic oriental monarch. Now, you see, if you were a slave of a, you know, you have been captured and carted off and you have been there and you weren't... you were a non person in your society, not even ethnically the same as the monarch. You were sort of a captured immigrant and enslaved. What could you hope to do for God's people? Have you thought about that? Now that is the way I typically think about things and it is wrong. It is negative, isn't it? Gloomy. You see, the way the positive man would think is that, oh, I am only a slave, but I am stood next to the most powerful person in the world. And he knows me and I have got his ear. Even as a slave, remarkable that. That is how God used it, isn't it? He stood next to humanly speaking the man with all the power and he was in a relationship with him, because the man with all the power noticed. He was said. That is the... he obviously knew this man, liked the man and said, as human beings do, “There is something wrong with you. What is up with you today, Nehemiah?”

And Nehemiah sort of sweats {?}. I suspect he had an adrenaline rush because he thought the next thing is me throat. I am gone. But he had courage, didn't he, because he prayed and fasted. He told the truth hat he was upset about Jerusalem. And then he must have been absolutely {?} when his throat was still intact and Artaxerxes said, “What do you want?” Magnificent. And he prayed and he told him and he got it. Wow. That is wonderful. And then when he gets there he shows tremendous leadership qualities. He assesses the situation carefully. He motivates others to help him which is a sign of true

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Joshua 1:8-9.

leadership. You don't have to do it all yourself. He shows wisdom and faith when opposed. He has the gifts of motivating. Everybody to work. He knows how to put them all to work in small areas and to supervise them. When he is personally threatened he shows tremendous integrity and courage. He joined the work. He didn't just supervise it. He helps the poor. He is not lavish in his leadership style. He reads the law. You use that in Ezra. He sorts out sin. And the quality that he shows that I have often lacked as a leader is that he is zealous in prayer.

Let's look at Nehemiah just as Cromwell had it, you know. Trust God and keep you powder dry. Well, Nehemiah... he must have got that from Nehemiah. Let's look at Nehemiah. Sorry, I am not concentrating onto where it is. There we are. Chapter four and verse eight.

They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.¹⁰

He was practical. He showed faith and practicality. That is good. {?} our brother here is... when I think of an example, a modern day example of faith and practicality {?} and the tsunami. He was in bed when that wave came almost to his back door. He had the flu. And the first thing he did, he gets up and borrow the equivalent of 50,000 pounds and, you know, English money, 5000 in Sri Lankan rupees in order to help poor people in need to buy things to pump out wells and get the bodies and do all that sort of thing on the understanding that his brothers in Christ will meet the need from the rest of the world. And he wasn't disappointed. He showed faith and practical care and that is what we should do. That was good. Praise God for you, Jacob.

I hadn't thought about the illustration until I saw him here. But I got emotional about that, because I think that just is exactly what I wouldn't have done. And that really is good to see another brother with that sort of favor. We should rejoice when we see that sort of thing in our brothers and sisters in Christ and be delighted in it and learn from them not to be so poor in often the way we serve the Lord.

And then when things got the better you encourage people. And that is, again, as elders we need to encourage people. And, again, if you are not an encouraging sort of person that is often very hard but it is still the job of a leader. He said in verse 14 of chapter four.

"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."¹¹

He motivated them with the glory and the magnificence of God to do the work that was needed.

¹⁰ Nehemiah 4:8-9.

¹¹ Nehemiah 4:14.

Prayer, faith amidst fear, concern for God's glory. In other words, he worked hard and he worked as hard and as long as they did. He didn't expect them to work longer. He was a remarkable leader. And the way I have applied Nehemiah over and over again in my own leadership is that I am often wracked by nerves. I hate conflict. And so you can see it coming a mile off and you just sometimes hope to keep your head down and they sort of go off the top of you and hit someone else. But a leader doesn't do that, you see.

So what do you do? Well, you think. You pray, "God, I am nervous. I don't know what to do. I don't like doing it. What is the biblical thing to do?"

Sometimes the biblical thing to do is to go and visit him. And you think, well, I just can't face it. And you pray. You get up and you do it. That is what Nehemiah did. That is how it is applied. You don't just pray. You do it. That is the thing. The two things have to go together, the prayer, the dependence on God means to you are to exercise faith, like Esther did. That is the other way I like. You know, Mordecai said, "Well, God will deliver by someone else if you don't do it." But when she went into the foyer and the king was sat here and as where he saw her just outside the door like you see people coming in here, he could have said, "Kill her," but he didn't. He put the scepter down and she came. But she had to show faith. She had to appear there and risk her life. And leadership demands that, too. Study leaders in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Look at Gideon, Samson, Saul, David, Peter, Paul, Timothy. There is loads of examples, both of good leaders and bad leaders. You need to know. Look at the bad as well.

Finally, abusive leadership styles. So what I have said is you are good with the character. You train people alongside in the apprenticeship model. And what we have done in church life is not have them appointed as elders, but when we have been training men, what we have done is asked the church for permission for them to come to the elders meeting and to work alongside us not as elders, but as people who we are looking to see if we can train them. And I would recommend that, because it gives them experience. The church needs to be assured that you aren't doing a backdoor approach to eldership. But it is still one way of training them. We didn't give them a title, because the Bible doesn't, but it is one way of training them alongside the eldership team and seeing how the dynamic works. And I commend that to you, but the church... the elders can't decide to do it. A church needs to be supportive and you are discussing their lives. And so they need to have some confidence in the person. But I recommend that model, the team model.

Finally, abusive leadership styles. The Church has such a bad... the churches have such a bad record in the world's eyes, sexual abuse. And I know it doesn't necessarily reply to Baptist churches, but it does. But the world out there doesn't distinguish between us. And that... what has happened amongst Roman Catholic churches in America and in Ireland and even here has really damaged the cause of Christ. We need to be very careful.

False claims of charismatic healers. I used to have an unbeliever, an old man, very cynical. And he used to watch these charismatic films on the telly and then tape record

them and send for me, gold dust on their hands, Benny Hinn who didn't heal anybody and had a vast lifestyle. And he has asked just to sit through them and he says, "That is what you are like, John. These are Christians. That is why I am not a Christian." Very, very painful. But there we are. May God bring bolts of thunder down unless they repent. It is a terrible thing that they do in the name of Christ. Lavish lifestyles, the TV evangelists, the health and wealth workers over in America.

Well, those things may not be true of us, but then you get on to the local Baptist church level there is often rudeness, aggression, autocratic leaders in small places. There is manipulation of the people in the congregation for their own power and gain or my own power and gain. And sadly as an older person you see so much of it you begin to wonder whether it is time to go to glory or not. You have had enough.

And so we need to be aware that these things are there, not pretend that they are not. You know, the clever leader, I see it. A talented young man, some of you may be like that. How are you going to make a name? Well, you need a niche. You need a niche. You need a ministry. That is what they do in America, that is slightly off center, something different, something slightly different that marks you out as different. You are not just the average, ordinary Baptist pastor pounding the streams looking after your congregation, evangelizing, preaching the same truths that people have preached for 2000 years. You have got a new insight, a new knack of doing things. You write your books. You criticize other Christian groups suggesting that your new, progressive, modern, lively, dynamic. This is the way forward. You are charismatic in personality. You have got positive thinking and you gather a crowd and with the crowd comes money and more books and conferences and you are away.

Now fortunately the English aren't really susceptible to it. It is more like America, but that is how it is done.

If you want to look at a book on church growth, that one in Chicago, Willow Creek. He said he ditched his reformed theology and then it made a success of his church. That is basically summarizing his philosophy {?}. He never was a reformed theology, but by that I mean what he meant he ditched doing it the Bible's way and was more flexible and therefore was able to grow. That is a great danger. This leader, once he has got the power he is often unaccountable. Financially he is imperious. He is in danger of doctrinal error and sexual immorality and dishonesty and you see it all if you live long enough.

Then the other way is, you know, just reactions. The other way is to say, "Oh, we can't cope with any of that and we are never going to have any change. We are always going to dress in our suits. We are always going to meet in the same way that we have always done. We are never going to think outside the box at all." And you get a conservative, authoritarian leader that makes you secure that everything, every end is tied up. He knows exactly what version to use, et cetera, et cetera. And people go for that. And they just gather more and more conservative minded people together. And it is negative.

But neither way is good. They are both abusive leadership styles. And it is one man

gathering a group of people that boosts his image. You know, if you have 20,000 people coming to your church, people want to hear you. If you have five or six they don't, necessarily. It is that sort of thing. You have got to be careful. So you see leadership failure in Scripture, don't you? Look at King David. He had power, he had leisure and the evidence of the seeds of failure were there before him. He had many wives, uncontrolled lust. And he was fiery. Only Abigail stopped him from slaughtering people unjustly.

And in spite of blessing and ability in leadership, absolutely brilliant leadership when he was... when he could have killed Saul, abject failure came to him in middle age. In a way this often comes to men by sexual immorality. And he had some sexually immoral {?} he lied. It was deceit. There was murder, not just of Uriah. There was a brazen cover up and then there was this {?} hypocrisy with Nathan. Where is the man? I am going to kill him. No insight. And then repentance. That is lovely. But read the rest of 2 Samuel. His family was killed in God's judgment. Don't be like that. But it is, you know, for most of us we haven't got that big personality. We haven't got the power and we are in small places and that is good, because the more power you have, the more tendency there is to abuse it and the more spirituality you need to have.

Then think of Solomon. He had wisdom. He had wealth. He had wonderful days. He built the temple. He had magnificent prayer. He met with God and yet he had a weakness for the women. Where did that come from? Was it David? And, of course, autocratic style and he failed by building a temple, you know, a temple for his women to worship in. He was, you know, the original multi culturalist. But God wasn't pleased.

Then you think in the New Testament of Demas who loved the world, of the false apostles and false teachers. John writes in 2 John:

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.”¹²

And that is true today, isn't it? Watch out.

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.”¹³

I would say, “How can you be in church fellowship with people who deny sin or the resurrection or the deity of Christ?” That is what I am about. I was an Anglican. I just couldn't be. Anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching...

When I was an altar boy serving in my local Anglican Church, before I was a Christian I got ready at the back to process down the aisle with a young trainee priest. You know, you walk down in all of your robes and so on. And as we stepped out he said, “You know, John, God doesn't exist. There is no God.” And we walked up and he went

¹² 2 John 1:7.

¹³ 2 John 1:10.

through the communion service and I did all the bowing and the scraping and the wiping and all the rest. And I thought this man is mad. Why is he training to be a preacher when he doesn't believe in God? It was the God is dead debate. But how can you be in fellowship with somebody who doesn't believe in him and apply the Scripture? Ponder that when you are thinking of church structure.

“Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.”¹⁴

That is what the apostle John says. It is not me. That is what the Scriptures say. And then in John three he writes:

“Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.”¹⁵

You know, you play Monopoly, you are playing cricket, you are playing football, you are playing squash. You are leading the church. There is always that desire to win and we have got to be careful in church life. Christ like leadership. So many dangers in exercising leadership. Bad decisions. We can be led astray doctrinally, moral corruption that the power, the more power you have it gives you the more ability to indulge in it and that thing that is at the root of most sin that most of us constantly battle with is pride. And the way forward is the biblical model.

I want to leave you with encouragement. Men of faith and character work together in local churches where power is limited, where they watch over each other's souls and they love each other as they work as a team together and their aim is to develop the local congregation in such a way that every Christian blossoms and grows and follows Christ filled with the Spirit. And their aim is that they should be great in gathering of God's people, more local churches arranged in the same simple local way with local elders and more and more glory for Christ. Such a simple model I have presented to you. So easy, so unattractive to powerful men. But this is the way forward. Servant leadership, Christ like leadership, filled with the Spirit, working together in local churches to produce more local churches for the glory of Christ.

¹⁴ 2 John 1:11.

¹⁵ 3 John 1:9.