The Church: Our Pastors

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Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] We are looking on Sunday mornings at what the Bible says about the New Testament church.

! How we're to live, how we're to function, what we are to do, and we want to make sure that we are biblical in everything that we do. If you are new to us, typically what we do on Sunday mornings is a study through a book of the Bible verse by verse. We're doing that on Sunday nights in our evening service. We're going through the book of Nehemiah at five o'clock. We'd love to invite and encourage you to come back tonight even to be a part of that. But on Sunday mornings for a few weeks, we're looking at this doctrine of the church, not just one specific book, but what does the New Testament say about the church? And so we began a couple of weeks ago starting with the truth that Christ is the head of the church. And that's important because in everything that we do, we need to be reminded that the church is not ours, it's His. That none of us here are the boss. Christ is the head, the authority of the church. And so we began there. Last week we looked at the worship of the church, specifically what we do when we gather on the Lord's Day. Now what are the things that we must do? Lots of things we could do. What are the things we must do when the church gathers? And so we looked at that last Sunday. This morning, I want us to look at what the Bible says about our pastors, the men the Lord has raised up to serve and to lead and to guide the church. How does that work? How are they supposed to function? What are they supposed to do? What do the different terms of the New Testament mean?
And I hope this will be an encouragement for all of us to better understand what we do and why we do it and how the Lord has so built and arranged His church. We're going to look at several different scriptures today. So let me encourage you to have your Bible open and handy. And if you would be ready to join me in a few different places. I want to start just by giving you some context here. Go with me to Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1. The Bible speaks of two offices in the New Testament.
We would commonly refer to those as pastors and deacons. I wanted to show you an example of that, and then we're going to spend our time this morning on what the Bible says about the role of the pastors in the church. Philippians 1 verse 1 says, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons. So what you see in the beginning of this letter written to the church at Philippi, you've got Paul and Timothy, who they refer to themselves as servants of Christ. That's who we all are. We serve Christ. He is the one that we worship. He is the one that we would have our eyes fixed on. We are His servants. He addresses the letter to the saints in Philippi. This is the redeemed.
All of us who are in Christ by His grace are saints, set apart for Christ. And then he says, this is together with, and you see these two terms, overseers and deacons. Let's take just a minute and make sure we're clear because what I don't want us to ever do as a church is just do something because we've always done it. I don't want us to do something just because that's what other churches do.
[3:59] And while I love and respect the history of our local church and am grateful for the history of our denomination, our own tradition nor a denomination's tradition is sufficient in terms of why we do what we do. It must be biblical. And so I don't want any of us to think we just do something because, or we just do it because that's how other churches have done it, or we do it that way because we've always done it. I want us to make sure that we are doing it according to what the Bible says.

And let's be very careful here because if there are things we are doing right and doing well by God's grace, let's persevere in that, but let's do it knowing the biblical foundation for it. If in the course of these weeks there's anything we're not doing how we should as a congregation or individually as a

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household, let's do our best to make sure that we instead do exactly what Scripture has called us to do. So, Philippians 1.1 gives us this description of overseers and deacons. Two groups.
The first group he calls overseers. In the New Testament you see the word overseer, you see the word pastor, you see the word shepherd, you see the word elder. All of these terms refer to the same function, the same office. What our church would normally refer to as a pastor, all of these terms are the same. So, you've got overseers and deacons, or you could say we have pastors and deacons, or you could say we have elders and deacons. All the same office, all the same function. The purpose in the New Testament of the overseer, of the pastor, of the elder is to teach, to protect, and to give direction in spiritual matters for the congregation. That's the role, that's the function. And then he mentions the deacons. The deacons are a group of servants given by God to the local church, and their responsibility is to assist the pastors, assist the elders in meeting the needs of people. And so, in the New
Testament church, the Lord has so designed His church that you've got leaders and functions, and so you've got elders, pastors, who are to teach, who are to lead. You've got servants called deacons who are assisting the elders, assisting the pastors in meeting the needs of the congregation. And the Bible says then that all of believers in the church have spiritual gifts that we are to all employ for the good of building up the church. So this is how the Lord has designed His church. Elders, pastors, overseers who teach and lead and direct, deacons who serve, church members who use their spiritual gifts to point to Jesus and to build up the body of Christ. Now, it's important that all of us understand what the New Testament's teaching is on the church, because if we don't, what you end up getting are churches who try to reinvent what a church is supposed to be, or pastors who try to reinvent what their role is, or deacons who try to make up what they want their role to be. The Bible is clear, and we need to make sure that we know and we stand on what the Bible says we are supposed to do. I also want to reiterate, and I hope by the time we get through with this study in a few weeks,
I hope that this has become so repeated and so ingrained in your head that you're just waiting and predicting when I'm going to say it again, okay? Christ is the head of the church. The pastors, the elders, the overseers, they're not the head of the church. Deacons aren't the head of the church. [8:06] Members aren't the head of the church. Christ is the head of the church. If we forget that, then you have pastors who expect unbiblical things, or you have church members who expect unbiblical things. Christ is the head of the church. I want that to be so clear in your mind that when you think about fall 2026, you just automatically say, Christ is the head of the church. I'm going to say it again if you're keeping track. Christ is the head of the church.

And that's got to be clear in our minds, because today we're going to look at the role and the function of pastors and elders and overseers, and they are important, and they have a specific and significant role to play, but they are not ever the head of the church. Ever. And there are churches where the pastors lose sight of that, and they start to want to be the head of the church, and that church eventually will crumble. And there are churches where the deacons want to be the head of the church.
And for a season, they may, but that church will crumble. And there are churches where the members decide we want to be in charge around here, and they forget that Christ is the head of the church.
So everything we're building on and adding to is on that foundation that there is a head, there is a ruler, there is an authority of the church, and His name is Jesus Christ. Amen? He is the head. We know what He wants by reading His Word He's given to us. And so it becomes imperative, not first that we know what our church has always done, not first that we know what a denomination has done, and not that we would think first, what do we together today in 2026 want? What matters most is what Christ, the head of the church, has given to us about His body. So, what I want to do this morning is ask and answer a few questions that I hope will be a great encouragement to you to help you to understand the church, the will of God, and how together we can function specifically related to the pastors of the local church. Number one, how does the New Testament refer to a pastor?
[10:45] How does the New Testament refer to a pastor? There are three words that are used. They're interchangeable. They all refer to the same office. I'm going to put them up here on the screen.

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They're also on the back of your sermon note insert to help you to have these words in your mind. Let me just kind of walk you through these words because they help give us a fuller picture when we understand them together of what the pastors are supposed to do and who they're supposed to be.

The first word you see on the top there in that kind of reddish pink circle is a word that's translated as pastor or shepherd. Poimen is the the Greek term there that gets translated here as pastor or shepherd. It's used all throughout the New Testament. It is often a term that can refer to one who cares for animals. It's used of Christ as it refers to him as the chief shepherd, which is very important that we remind ourselves of that. The church has pastors, shepherds, but there is a chief shepherd and he is Christ. And we find in the New Testament several places where you see the verb form of this. I've got some of the scripture on this on this graphic that I've borrowed and put on here to hopefully be a help for you. But you see the the word used in places like John 21, in Acts 20, in 1 Peter 5,

Ephesians 4 speaks of a shepherd. 1 Peter 2 25 speaks of a shepherd and overseer. 1 Peter 5 speaks of a shepherd and an shepherd and an elder. So that first term we see is poimen that means pastor or shepherd.

Whenever you see that term in the New Testament, it's referring within the confines of the local church to what we would commonly think of as a pastor. There's a second word, episkopos, that is translated as overseer, sometimes as bishop. This is a word that was that was common in the day to refer to leaders. It was it was referred to people who were in charge of overseeing a city. It's used of Christ.

[13:13] It's used of church leaders. We see it in Acts 20 where the term overseer is used. You see in 1 Timothy 3 uses episkopos, which means overseer. Titus 1, see the same thing. 1 Peter 2, we see the word for shepherd and overseer. So if you're reading the New Testament and you come across the term for overseer in context of local church, we're talking about what you and I would commonly think of and refer to as a pastor. There's a third term, elder. Presbuteros is the the original word here that you see in the New Testament. That term is used in a couple of different ways. That term is sometimes used to describe those who are older in age and in the confines of the church used to describe those in certain positions of responsibility, positions of authority.

My friend Tom Pennington, pastor at Countryside Bible Church, speaking on this word, said it as well as it can be said. He said this second usage, speaking of elder in the church, of one who is in a place of responsibility or authority, it said it speaks to a man's maturity, dignity, and experience.

I can't say it any better than that. To speak of a biblical elder in the Scripture is not just to speak of somebody who simply has a position. It's speaking of his maturity, speaking of his dignity, and of his experience. That's important. Nineteen times in the book of Acts and the epistles, it refers to a group of leaders in the local church with this term, which is elder. So you have elders in the New Testament, sometimes referring to the Sanhedrin in the Gospels. You find the term in the book of Revelation, dealing with the 24 elders. But in the book of Acts and in the epistles of the New Testament, nineteen times you see this term, presbyteros, that refers to an elder in the church, someone who has a specific role of leadership in the local church. So you can see on this diagram here, the

English term, the Greek term, some of the Scriptures where it's used. You can see where the words are used interchangeably. This isn't all of it by any means, but these are some of the places where it's used.

And I just want you to see the fullness of what this office is. So when you're reading the Bible, you may come across a passage that speaks of a pastor or a shepherd. A different book of the Bible, a different human author may use the term overseer. A different book, a different letter, or a different author might use the term elder. And we're speaking of the same function.

[16:21] Pastors, overseers, elders. When you read those terms in the context of the local church, we're talking all about the same function. We know that because 1 Timothy 3, for example, Titus 1, give the qualifications of one of an overseer, the other of an elder, virtually the exact same.

In Titus 1, he will use the term for elders in verse 5. In verse 7, just two verses later, he'll use the term overseer. 1 Peter 5, Acts 20, among places you'll see those terms used interchangeably. So I just want you to understand that when you're reading the New Testament Scripture, whether you refer to them as a shepherd, as a pastor, as an elder, as an overseer, you're referring to the role and the function of the office of what we would most commonly think of here as a pastor. All the

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same function. But the three terms taken together are very helpful.
Because it helps us to understand more fully what to expect from the men who occupy this role in the church. The elder speaks of his character. Overseer speaks of his work. And pastor shepherd speaks of his heart.
So when someone in the church is an elder in the church, or a pastor in the church, it's not just that they have a certain title, it ought to be a reference to their character, to the responsibilities they have, and to the heart with which they do the work.
And so it's important that we understand that. And when you see all three of these words working together, what we see is what the New Testament expects of the men who serve in this way.
[18:33] And so when we think here for our congregation about the role of the leaders of the church, the question is not what do those men want to do?

And the question is not what does the church say they should do? The question is what does Christ say they should do? And those men are to have a certain character, a certain knowledge, a certain giftedness.
And they should do their work with a heart of compassion. That's how we're to serve the local church.
Maturity, dignity, and experience. Now that really is important because any local assembly can have a man or a group of men they call pastor.
But the question is, is that church functioning biblically? And in our world today, when you think of the New Testament term of being an elder, it carries with it that yes, there is a certain task and responsibility that they have.
[19:53] There's also a way in which that role is to be lived out. And the three terms I gave you earlier that I thought were so helpful, maturity, dignity, and experience.

There's a certain dignity in the New Testament with how men who are pastors are to do what they're called to do. Just because you stand in front of a group of people and speak for a while does not mean you're performing the biblical role of an elder.
There is a certain dignity there. And I've got to be very honest and transparent with you. The whole idea of dignity with men who serve as elders in the church has really fallen on some pretty tough times.
And the problem is where these men say, well, I'm redefining what a pastor, redefining what an elder is, or congregations who are wanting to redefine what they do. The Bible doesn't need redefined.
It needs understood, taught, and proclaimed. And so when you think of the three terms, it tells us a lot of the character, of the work, and of the heart with which they are to serve.
[21:09] Let's look at a second question. You can take that screen, that slide down now. Thank you. Who can be a pastor, or overseer, or elder?

What does the New Testament say about that? I'm going to ask you to turn to a couple of different places because I really want you to see this with your own eyes in your own copy of the Scripture to understand this because it's not tradition or preference we're leaning on here.
It's biblical text. I want to give you four terms that I think are helpful as we think about how the Bible describes it's not just that they are to be men.
There are certain kinds of men that the Bible calls to do this. It's not a matter of just a guy who wants to do something or a guy who just wants to be in charge or a guy who just wants to be creative.
Let's make sure we're biblical in how the New Testament describes the men who serve in this role.
Number one, there must be a sense of calling.
[22:15] Go to 1 Timothy 3 with me. I want you to see this with your own eyes here. 1 Timothy 3. Verse 1.

The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, there's that term, he desires a noble work.
So there's got to be a sense of calling. There's got to be some kind of internal desire to do this. All of us as believers are called to serve the Lord.
All of us as believers are called to be in the Word, to share the Gospel. All of us are on the front lines of Christian ministry. But the Lord has given to the local church pastors, elders, overseers to lead that congregation.

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And one of the ways that you would know who those men are is they would have a sense of calling, a sense of desire to do this. And one of the reasons it's so important that we know biblically what a pastor is, is there are young men in this church, children, teenagers, adults, who the Lord, I am quite confident, will call to be pastors and leaders and elders in a church.
[23:37] And what I don't want are people in our congregation thinking that what it is to be a pastor is something different than what the New Testament says. Because that sense of desire or that sense of calling, of craving to do this, needs to be in line with what the Bible says a pastor is to be.

So there's a sense of calling. Second, there must be a certain character. Stay with me in 1 Timothy 3. I read verse 1.
Let's pick up in verse 2. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.
He must manage his own household well, with all dignity. There's that word again. Keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?
He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.
[25:07] Go with me to the right, just a few pages to Titus 1. 1 Timothy 3 described what he called overseers.

Now in Titus, it's going to be the term elder. Titus 1, verse 5. This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.
If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, his children are believers, not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.
He must not be arrogant, or quick-tempered, or a drunkard, or violent, or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.
He must hold firm to the trustworthy word is taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine, and also to rebuke those who contradict it. So you see the term elder and overseer here in the same passage, because both words, along with the word for pastor, referring to the same office.
[26:24] So there's a sense of calling, but there's also a sense of character. Now, no pastor is perfect, because pastors are men who are sinners saved by God's grace.

No church is perfect, no pastor is perfect, no pastoral team is perfect, no group of elders are perfect, but they should be faithful examples. Not perfect, that's impossible, but they should be faithful examples.
If you have this idea that pastors are somehow so different than you, so removed from you, you need to see your pastors in a more human way, they're just regular people.
However, they are called in the word to be faithful examples to the flock. So yesterday, we had a birthday party for my beautiful granddaughter, Rosie May, she just turned two, and we had a birthday party for her, and we had cake.
Not pastor cake, just cake. And there is a piñata, not a holy piñata, just a piñata, filled with regular candy.
[27:46] Because our families are regular family. Our pastor's families are regular families. They're normal people. It is fair, though, that you should expect your pastors to have a certain character.

Now, keep in mind, one of the things the New Testament says, that we'll look at in just a moment, is that the pastors are to be examples to the flock. If you've been given an example, we understand easily, that means you're to follow it.
So, when we talk about how a pastor or overseer or elder should live and behave, this is not something for the church. People say, oh good, I don't have to do that. No, they're to be examples for you to follow.
We all ought to be growing in our walk with the Lord. We all ought to be maturing maturing and serving and pointing people to Jesus. We all ought to be involved in praying and evangelism and giving and all those kinds of things.

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But the pastors of the church are to be faithful examples to the flock through their character of how to do that. So, as a pastor here, I have a marriage to Marcy and the marriage is not perfect and we would never claim to be perfect or put ourselves on the pedestals of being perfect.
[29:10] But we ought to be a faithful example to you of marriage. We ought to be a faithful example of how we relate to each other, of our fidelity with each other, of how we talk about each other.

We're not perfect. We never claim to be perfect. But you have the right to expect that in our marriage you would see a faithful example to you.
Not so that you would say, well, I don't want to do all that. No. An example is for you to follow. We ought to all be growing in that. But the pastors, the elders, the overseers of a church are to be men of character.
Third, there's a certain competency. There's a calling. There's a desire to do it. There's a character that's biblical. And a competency, an ability.
Specifically, in the two texts I read you, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, we can boil it down, I think, to these three competencies, these three abilities.
[30:22] They must be able to teach, must be able to correct error, and must be able to manage well. They have to be able to teach, explain the Bible, correct error, know right from wrong and how to refute it, and they must be able to manage well.

The Bible says, if they can't manage their own household, how can they manage Christ's church? That's the competency a pastor must have.
And then fourth, write down the word confirmation. The local church should affirm and confirm that these are men that have been called by God with a biblical character, competent to teach, to correct, and to manage.
And that is confirmed by the local church. And so in our church here, you should not be surprised to find out that our pastors are imperfect.
None of us are perfect. But you should expect a certain kind of character and competency of your pastors, and that has been confirmed by the church as the body of Christ, that these are the men God has given to this congregation to lead and to direct us toward Jesus.
[31:47] Which brings us to a third question then. What is that biblical role? What is the role of the pastor? Or in a different book of the Bible, what is the role of the elder?

What is the role of the overseer? I want to invite you to join me in one other text if you would please. 1 Peter 5. 1 Peter 5. 1 Peter 5.
Verse 1, I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.
Let me just pause on that phrase. The work of the pastor, the work of the elder is to be done as God would have. Not what those men decide to do.
Not what a group of deacons decides they should do. Not what a group of church members decides they should do. The role and the function of the pastor, of the elder, of the overseer is to do what God would have us do.
[33:18] How do we know what God would have us do? By reading His Word. And this is why I want you to see this with your own eyes and your own text here because the way you know the job description of a pastor is not just because your church always did this or just because our church always did this or just because this is what the seminaries taught or just because it's what our denomination has taught.

The most important thing always is how would God have us to do this? That's what our church must constantly remind ourself of in everything.
What do we do when we worship? What do the pastors do? What do the deacons do? How do spiritual gifts work? How should we do missions? Everything that we look at as a church, everything should be through the lens of how would God have us to do this?
Keep reading. Not for shameful gain, but eagerly. Let me stop here and deal with that for just a second. I would be honest with you and tell you that being a pastor is humanly speaking, it's the greatest joy of my life outside of being known as Marcy's husband.
Being a pastor to me is just the sweetest joy I'd have to be honest and tell you I love what I do.

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[34:55] I can't see myself doing anything else. I've said many times I love my life in honesty. I would hate to be married to me. I would. But I love my life.

I love what I do. I love the people I serve with. If I were talking to a young man feeling called a pastor and he said, do you like what you do?
I would tell him I wouldn't trade this for anything. And I mean that sincerely. I would not trade what I do for anything in this world.
I would also tell him it's a hard life. And there's a lot of pain. And there's a lot of weight.
And there's a burden you never get out from under. Now I want to push back a little bit. People that do what I do, other pastors in other churches, I get frustrated when they talk about just how hard their life is as if raising children as a mom isn't hard.
[36:06] As if teaching school and being a principal isn't hard. As if owning your own business isn't hard. As if going to work every day to do whatever you do. All of us have struggles.

All of us. I don't like when other pastors complain and beg for pity about how hard their life is. Is it hard? It is. Are there weights and burdens?
There is. But I'm looking in the eyes of every single person here who has some hard things in their life. And some challenges and some demands. And the Bible text tells me that shepherds, elders in the church ought to do this eagerly.
Eagerly. Not begrudgingly. And what I hope you hear from me loud and clear and I'm quite confident I'm speaking for all of our pastoral team in this.
We love what we do. We love it. And it's not just the task. We love serving you.
[37:12] We love not just being a pastor. We love pastoring you. And I don't run from the fact that it can be really hard.

And I acknowledge the fact that there's some extra pressure that goes on you and the family and sometimes it's as heavy as having to deal with death and heartbreak and grief a lot.
And sometimes it's as seemingly trivial as you take a day off and someone calls the church and asks for me and Mandy, my assistant, says, oh, he's out today. And then you see me at Walmart and you say, I thought you were out.
What's that about? It may be as simple as that. It's hard because people sometimes expect me to be somewhere and I can't be everywhere. It may be something heavy. It may be something trivial. There's days that are really hard. But I want you to understand something. You are a delight to serve. Our pastors love Christ and love what we're called to do but we love doing it here together with you.
[38:19] And you need to know that your love and your support and your grace and your thankfulness is a huge reason why if you look at our pastors you start to say those guys are starting to look a little old and a little gray and a little bald.

Why is that? Because we didn't used to be that way because guys tend to come here and stay and grow old. And that's because of you.
And you need to understand that by God's grace you have a huge part to play in why our pastors to use the New Testament term here eagerly do what we do.
Is everyday paradise? No. Is every meeting joyful? No. Are there burdens that you carry that you never ever get out from under?
There are. But you are a precious people to serve. And that's why you've got pastors that have been here 26 years and 16 years and 15 years and 9 years and 4 1⁄2 years because you are a joy to serve.
[39:53] We do it eagerly. Keep reading. Not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. Perfect? No.

Faithful examples? Yes. Now notice verse 4. And when the chief shepherd appears that's important there is a chief shepherd shepherd.
And it's not anybody whose picture is on our website. The chief shepherd is Christ. We need to do all that we've been given to do as we point people not to us but to the chief shepherd.
shepherd. So, let's take this text and let's boil it down to five quick things that the biblical pastor or overseer elder is to do. Number one, feed the flock.
It's verse 2. You need to feed the flock. And so, I'll just kind of give you some insight into my life and to my schedule and how I try to live this out.

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[41:03] Monday mornings our staff meets together. We read the Bible out loud together. We do Bible study together. We talk through any significant events of that week that needs discussion.

Our pastors then stay behind and we're dealing with issues for those who maybe have questions about salvation or questions about being baptized.
We deal with issues related to church discipline. We deal with issues related to theological things that have come up and asked of us or that we may be dealing with in our own areas of ministry.
And then for me, the rest of the week that flips. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. There's exceptions but for the most part, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, my mornings, I'm in my study.
My afternoons, I'm with people. So, when I get a chance to speak to other pastors at conferences or do Q&As on pastoral ministry, the two words I use for young men to learn what pastoral ministry is, I'll use the word alone and among.
[42:06] among. You've got to be able to be alone with God and among the people. And you've got to do both of those faithfully. You've got to be alone with God to study and to read and to pray so that you are prepared and ready to feed your people.

But, you've got to be among the people if you're going to be an example to them. And so, I try to structure my week that cleanly. Now, I can do that because I work with wonderful men and with wonderful ladies who honor that and support that and enable me to do that.
I've got a wonderful team all around me that's faithful to meet with people, faithful to serve, faithful to counsel, faithful to visit. Not everybody can do that. But that's how I structure my week so that I can try to do all that God's called me to do alone with God and among the people.
So, if you call or come by Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, there's exceptions. But generally, Mandy's going to say, I'm so sorry, he's not available, but I'll be available when I get through studying.
I protect that time to be alone with God and in my afternoons, I'm meeting with our staff, I'm meeting with potential new members, I'm making home visits, going to make hospital visits, all the things our pastors do.
[43:23] We've got to be ready to feed the flock. Number two, lead the flock. That's verse three to be examples. Number three, protect the flock. Number four, manage the flock.

Number five, we see it in James in the New Testament, to pray for the flock. So what must your pastors do?
Feed, lead, protect, manage, and pray. Where you get pastors who invent their own job description, that church gets off course.
Where you have church members who demand things of the pastors that are extra biblical, that church gets off course.
And where you have pastors who feel like everything rises and falls on them, they've got to do everything, they've got to be everywhere, they've got to be at every meeting, they've got to make every visit, they've got to be at every fellowship.
[44:36] The problem there is not a pastor running himself too much, the problem there is a pastor who's built that ministry about him and has been afraid to expand the base of leadership.

It's important that you understand in the Scripture you have what's called a plurality of elders, not just one. He says in multiple places to appoint elders, plural, there needs to be a group of men who are sharing this.
And it's important that we understand that the role of the pastor, the role of the elder, the role of the overseer is to shepherd as God would have us. So at the end of every single week, all of your pastors have read, they've prayed, they've made visits, they've written sermons, Bible studies, they've organized for ministry, and not one week will one of your pastors ever go home and have done everything they could have done.
That would be impossible. And there may be some weeks they don't do what you wish they would have done. Well, what we all have to come back to is, are the pastors and elders shepherding as God would have us?
I'm not the boss, there's a chief shepherd. Our team of pastors aren't the boss, there's a chief shepherd. Our deacons aren't the boss, there's a chief shepherd. The members aren't the boss, there's a chief shepherd.
[46:17] And it's sad how often churches forget that simple truth. And if you say, why do you keep saying that Christ is the head of the church and that you've got to serve and minister as God would

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have you, it's because I could tell you this very day, church is falling apart where that's been forgotten.

Christ is the head of the church. He has given to the church men who have a calling, a godly character, a competency to teach, refute, and manage confirmed by the church to feed them, to lead them, to protect them, to manage them, and to pray for them.
Not to dictate, not to rule over, but to point them to Jesus. And I'm just convinced there's not a sweeter place in the world for a team of men to fulfill that godly function than right here in this church.
church. And on behalf of our team of pastors, I want you to know how much we love you and how thankful we are to get to do this.
So in closing, let me just ask a fourth question to help with this. Who are the pastors in our church? Who are the overseers in our church?
[47:49] Who are the elders in our church? church. We have five. Michael and the four J's.

I got grandfathered in. I would never get hired today. Michael, Jeff, John, Joey, Jeremy.
It's really confusing. Now, when we call these men pastors, here's what I need you to understand. This term isn't used in a careless or haphazard way.
There are problems going on in churches around our nation because they're using titles in a non-biblical way. And that's causing, you may know it, you may not know it, it's causing quite a bit of damage to local churches.
People who are calling people pastors who aren't biblically qualified to be pastors but then saying, well, they don't really do that function. They just have the title. Well, in the Bible, the language matters.
[48:56] The words matter. The terms matter. The expectations matter. So, this church has five that are elders, five that are pastors, five that are overseers.

We have a ministry staff that are incredibly important that we could not survive without. out. We have volunteers and church members who use their gifts, who teach, who serve, who sing, who visit, who greet, who give, who evangelize.
We've got members by the hundreds at this church who are faithfully doing what God's called them to do. And we don't have a varsity and a JV.
We're all sinners, saved by grace, Christians, empowered by the Holy Spirit, gifted by the Spirit, to do what He's called us to do. In the counsel of God revealed through His Word, this local church, like all biblical churches, has a plurality of elders or a plurality of pastors, of overseers.
And those five men, Michael, Jeff, John, Joey, and Jeremy, are all to be doing the biblical work of an elder, of a pastor. That doesn't mean everybody's got the same strengths where everybody's got the same gifts, where everybody's got the exact same measure of certain talents.
[50:19] There's a variety there. But if you are a pastor of a local church, whether you are paid or volunteer, whether your title is pastor or elder, if you are in that function, then it ought to be the expectation that you are doing what a biblical pastor and elder does.

Those terms matter. And so, there's no such thing in our team when we get to something really heavy.
Maybe we're dealing with a really complicated church discipline issue. There's no such thing as John says, hey, I'm just the music guy. I'll sit this one out.
He's not the music guy. He's a pastor on our staff. He's an elder on our team. His public responsibility is largely music.
But he is to do everything that a biblical elder pastor does. It would make no sense to give him that title if not that expectation.
[51:28] There's no such thing when something gets really complicated for Joey to say, hey, I'm the youngest one here. You guys figured this out. I'm just the young guy. No. First of all, you're not that young anymore.

You're 30. Second of all, if he's got that title, there's an expectation that he can teach the truth, that he can refute error, that he can manage well.
It doesn't mean everybody's got the exact same measure of strengths and gifts. It means everyone that in that church is recognized as a pastor, elder, or overseer ought to be doing what biblical pastors do.

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So, in our staff, there may be primary things that these men do publicly. Every pastor on our staff, every one of them, preaches, because they're supposed to be able to teach, are expected to be able to correct, because you've got to be able to refute error, are expected to own the responsibility of decisions that are made.
Nobody walks out and says, well, Jeff did it. No. If it's a decision our pastors made, we all own that because we all have a voice in that. All of our pastors do funerals.
[52:47] All of our pastors do weddings. All of our pastors visit and counsel with people. All of our pastors meet with prospective new members. All of our pastors are a part of church discipline issues.

All of our pastors have a voice as we try to work through theological issues we're studying and working on together because if you have that title, there is a biblical expectation of what you do.
Do we do it perfectly? Of course not. Are there times where there is no easy, simple answer and you have to do the best you can as you pray and test the Scriptures?
Sure. There's all kinds of occasions that come our way and we say we can't chapter and verse this one and we can get outside help and we can get other trusted men in the church to speak into it and there are times there's just not clear answers.
But when our pastors, when your overseers and your elders move and speak forward, we do that as a group of men accountable to you to serve as God would have us and accountable to God who is the chief shepherd.
[54:00] Because this is not our church. this is his church. And so when you see on our staff that certain men have the title of pastor, think calling, character, competency, confirmation by the church, church.

But you can also think of the word responsibility. Because those men carry the biblical responsibility of everything a New Testament pastor, elder, overseer has been called to do.
And if any of the five of us ever stop doing that eagerly and willingly with a shepherd's servant's heart, then we need to find something else to do.
we don't get to change what a pastor does. We do that as God would have us.
So, Christ is the head of the church. Pastors, elders, deacons, or men called by God, given to the church to feed, lead, protect, manage.
[55:17] deacons who are called to assist those elders, assist those pastors to serve the members of the church. And church members who are empowered by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts to bless each other so that at the end of it all, as we just function how God would have us, the glory goes one place, our choir sing about it, the only worthy one who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Not because I said so, not because a committee said so, not because tradition said so, but because Christ, who is the head of the church, has revealed in His Word how in an orderly way we function We function for the good of the body and the glory of Christ.
Christ. Now this morning, if you don't know Christ as your Savior, can I just remind you that He is the chief shepherd? And the good news is the chief shepherd is the one that you can count on to always do right.
It is Christ alone who can save. It is Christ alone who forgives sin. And whether you've been a member of a church for your entire life or this is the first day you've ever set foot in a church, the most important thing you can know is why is it that everything is about what Jesus says?
Because Christ alone is the ruler of all. And Christ alone has died for our sin. And Christ alone is worthy of our worship.
[57:04] And if you've never called out to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him to forgive forgive you, to be your Lord and Savior, I want to ask you this very day to call out to Him, confess your sin, acknowledge your need, then ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you.

And here's the good news of the gospel, our God saves. And church, this is our message.
Pastors, deacons, staff members, volunteers, church members, we have one message.
And that one singular message is salvation found only in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we sing.
That's why we preach. That's why you generously give. That's why you volunteer your time. That's why you do what you do.
[58:17] Because in spite of our weakness, our God is gracious. Jesus, and the neighborhoods around us, and the nations of the world need to hear, Jesus saves.

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And until He comes, let this church be found faithful to herald from this pulpit and every classroom and every conversation the good news of salvation in the name of Jesus.
Amen. Lord, Your Word for us continues to help us. I pray that it clarifies our thinking. I pray that it helps us to consider all things of our church through the lens of what would honor You.
Lord, may You continue to use this church and these dear people to accomplish the work You have set before us. In Christ's name, Amen.
Amen. Amen.

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