The Church and Her Leadership

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[0:00] Like a delay there where y'all had to wake up a little bit. So let's try again. Good morning. Good, good, good, good. Hey, in this session, we are talking about the church and her leadership.

Now, this is a very important discussion because as I'm sure you've seen and perhaps experienced, different churches are structured or led in different ways.
Some have a pastor. Some have multiple pastors. Some pastors are called elders. Some have church membership. Some don't have church membership.
Some have deacons who primarily lead like a board. Some have deacons who primarily serve. Some don't have deacons at all. You know, seemingly as many different churches as there are, there are just as many different ways for a church to be structured or led.
So, if these churches seem to be doing fine on their own, do we really need to talk about how a church is or isn't to be led?
[1:08] Does it really matter at the end of the day? Is a church's leadership objective, meaning there's a universal principle for the local church, or is it subjective?

It's kind of a you-do-you. Is it a mixture of the two or none of the above? Why does the local church and her leadership matter?
Well, before we dive in, let's consider an example that might help us kind of shape our discussion. What if there was an adult male in a family who said, you know, I just love kids and I love women. I don't need to define who my kids and my wife are. I don't even need to be a dad or a husband. Maybe my wife should be the husband.
These are just archaic, old cultural labels anyway. I just need to love God, to love people, and to do life together. After all, you know, being a family member, it's legalistic.
[2:18] It's just a formality on a piece of paper. Jesus just told us to love one another. So, why does it matter if I'm this dad-husband in that seat and my wife is in this wife-mom seat and I know who are and aren't my kids?

Why can't I just be a person and just love all the kids and all the women? Now, would that man be fulfilling God's biblical design and ideal for a father, for a husband?
Would his wife feel secure in her relationship with him? What would happen if one of his own actual children had a specific need, like a medical issue or needed parental authorization or was walking down a very dangerous road in their life?
Who provides for them and how do we know? Who protects them and how do we know? Who are they accountable to and how do we know?
Would this be God's design for a healthy family? Well, let me ask. If God has defined roles and purposes and accountability and provision and protection in our physical families, would God not define roles, purposes, accountability, provision, and protection for our spiritual families?
[3:54] What I hope over the next few minutes to put on display is that God does indeed care about how his local churches are structured and led.

And that God, in his word, has both prescribed and described certain offices or roles in the local church through which he equips, cares for, protects, feeds, and leads his church and its members. Now, while God has prescribed and described these things for his church, He has also left much of how a church is built upon that structure open for application in various contexts, times, and places. And there's great wisdom in that. But that which God has expressly given for his church, we want to honor. Therefore, this morning, we're going to look at three distinct offices or roles in the church that God has uniquely and objectively given to his church for his glory and our good.
Today, we're going to look at the biblical offices of pastor, deacon, and member. And now we're going to walk through a lot of scripture this morning, so have your Bibles ready, which is a good

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thing.
[5:24] But before we do, I want to address a temptation that might be creeping in at this point. And that's the temptation to check out because, hey, we already know this, right?

We already have pastors, we have deacons, we have members in our church. Plus, I'm a teenager, I don't make these decisions, I'm not a pastor. Do we really need to cover this right now?
Can't Parker just show us how to break into a house again? Well, here's an important truth. The things from God's word that we do not regularly consider can easily slide off into one of two ditches. And that's assumption or neglect. Now, assumption in a church can lead to varying personal traditions or understandings or applications that eventually come into conflict with one another. What I assume may be different than what you assume. My background and experience may be different than your background and experience. Therefore, it is important that we return again and again to the Bible's direction for our statutes, not our own assumptions, especially as we are somewhat younger and developing these understandings.
[6:52] Now, on the other side, neglect in a church can lead to a dangerous drift. Because here's one thing about people, and especially church people, that's that left to ourselves, we will always drift towards man's ideas and man's systems, not God's.

We are pulled more by pragmatism than by purity. We tend more towards common comfort than common confession. And we are tempted to define success based on fandom and not on faithfulness.
And so the reality is that the doctrines we neglect today will be the ones dividing us in the future. And those doctrines we neglect in our generation, we will fail to pass down to future generations, likely dividing them.
So as Christians, we should actively seek to understand the foundations of a healthy, biblical, local church.
Doing so will equip us to stand resiliently firm on the foundation of God's word through whatever God would have us face both today and in the future.
[8:15] And so we want healthy, local, biblical churches trusting and following Jesus together and functioning in the way that Jesus desires for his church.

Okay, so therefore, biblically, a local church should be led and structured in the following way. The local church should be ruled by Christ, led by pastors, served by deacons, and affirmed and exercised by members according to God's word.
Now I'll say that again. The local church should be ruled by Christ, led by pastors, served by deacons, and affirmed and exercised by members according to God's word.
Okay, so first, let's look at why the local church is to be ruled by Christ. So if you have your Bibles, open to Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1 will be in verses 15 through 23.
As you're turning there, I'll say the most important thing about any church is its relationship to its head. And that's Jesus the Christ.
[9:34] If a church fails to get that part right, then nothing else it does will matter. It won't matter how many buildings they build, how full their parking lots are, how many likes they get on social media.

If a church does not have Christ at its center and on its throne, it will fail according to God's standards, though it may thrive according to man's.
As Paul writes to the local church in Ephesus, in Ephesians 1, beginning of verse 15, For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in, in what?
I mean, what could be so important, so above, so secure and foundational that Paul does not cease to give thanks for this church and remembers them in his prayers because they hold it so central? What is the wisdom that has been revealed to them by God the Spirit, by which God has enlightened the eyes of their hearts that they may know Him? What is it by which they have been called, upon which they secure their hope, that which is the richness of their eternal inheritance, the

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very immeasurable greatness of the power of God according to the working of His great might? [11:46] What is the pinnacle at which all these things point? Verse 20, that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
So note, Paul doesn't praise the church for their ability to finally unlock the perfectly agreeable music style. He doesn't exult in the church because they've nailed children's programming or have the greatest social media presence.
But Paul's exultation for the church is really not in the church or its activities at all. Paul's greatest joy and glory and celebration for the church is its centrality on Christ.
To Paul, nothing else matters. Paul's emphasis and his focus are not on common preferences, but in verse 15, on common faith.
[13:21] And the source of this faith, Paul says, is not a common style, but verse 17, a common spirit. And this spirit gives them the wisdom, the revelation, the knowledge, not of a common hype, but verse 18, of a common hope.

In verses 19 through 21, this common hope is not in their common systems, but their common salvation. And their common salvation comes through one thing alone, and that is their common head, Jesus their Christ, who is not only over all things, but his head over all things related to the church.
And why? Because the church is his body. The church's king and its head is Jesus Christ alone.
So the local church is to be ruled by Christ, but from here, it's not just a free-for-all. Jesus is not the head of a disorganized body that he cares not to direct.
The body of Christ and the local expressions of it have specific parts that serve the body in specific ways.
[14:47] And one of those ways is that the local church is to be led by pastors. Okay, and to look at this truth, we're going to look at Titus, chapter 1, beginning in verse 5.

So go ahead and turn there. Titus, chapter 1, beginning in verse 5. As you're turning there, the book of Titus is a letter written by the apostle Paul to Titus, who was a Gentile convert who traveled and walked alongside Paul for many years.
And then later in his ministry, Titus was tasked by Paul to establish and organize and structure local churches on the island of Crete, where they had shared the gospel and seen many come to salvation through Christ.
And so here's how Paul directs Titus to begin the work. Titus, chapter 1, beginning in verse 5. He says, 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 and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination, for an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.
[16:11] 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 as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.
One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons, and this testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.
To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.
[17:27] They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

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So how is Titus to begin structuring this local church in a way that they hold firm to sound doctrine amongst a culture that is strongly devoted to turning itself and others away from the truth?
Well, to lead the church in what is right and true, and to feed the church with sound doctrine and to protect the church from those who would seek to lead them astray, Paul directs Titus to appoint elders.
In verse 7, they're called overseers who are charged with the task of shepherding or pastoring the local churches in every town.
Verse 5 says, appoint elders in every town as I directed you. So that is Paul's first step of putting local churches in order.
[18:38] Now the word elders is not one that Baptists have used a lot over the last several decades, though it was prevalent in Baptist history and is increasingly becoming the biblical term that Baptist churches are returning to to describe this biblical role.

But the Greek words for this role are presbyteros. Presbyteros.
I must not have pronounced that correctly. Often translated as elder and cross your fingers, episkopos, often translated as overseer.
Now we often today describe those in the office by their function as shepherds or those who pastor. That's the Greek poimen, who pastor specific flocks of sheep.
And so though elders is the most common term for this role in the Bible, pastors, elders, overseers all describe the same office in the church meant to lead, feed, and protect the church according to sound doctrine by the word of God.
[19:56] That's the primary function of a church's pastors. Now something we see is that being a pastor is not primarily a job, a vocation, or a profession.

It is first and foremost a role in the church for spiritually leading, equipping, and protecting the church. And now while churches do employ some pastors vocationally as able in accordance with 1 Timothy 5.18, vocational or volunteer pastors, elders, overseers are to be identified and affirmed in the church as those who meet the biblical requirements outlined in Titus 1.5-9 and 1 Timothy 3.1-7.
So pastors are not identified by their academics or their charismatic speaking ability or their business knowledge.
They are identified according to the biblical qualifications that we find in God's word. church. The Lord agrees. Now how many pastors should a church have?
Well, according to the scriptures, ideally, a local church has a plurality of pastors and elders. Now why do I say this? Because in the scriptures, that is how the office is referenced in the plural.
[21:28] Just to read a few, Acts 14.23, and when they had appointed elders for them in every church, Acts 11.30, and they did so sending to the elders, Acts 16.4, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

Acts 20.17, from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. In Philippians 1.1, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.
So when the Bible speaks of the role of pastor, elder, overseer, it does so in plurality. Now why is it good that a local church have multiple pastors?
Well one, doing so provides a counsel of wisdom. Proverbs 11.14 says, in an abundance of counselors there is safety.
Two, having multiple pastors keeps the church from dependence on one man's personality, giftings, or ideas. Three, having a plurality of pastors protects the church from a rogue pastor and protects the pastor from a rogue church.
[22:57] Pastors and churches must have broad accountability. Fourth, having multiple pastors protects the long-term stability and resilience of the church as all men are temporary, but the church's need for direction and protection is ongoing.

So should a pastor leave a church for whatever reason or get mauled by a bear, the direction and the leading and the feeding and protection of the church should not leave with him.
Fifth, and last, having more pastor elders provides a greater reach of shepherding relationship. Many of our churches have hundreds of members on their role.
There is no way that one man can shepherd or care for hundreds of people in a way that adequately protects and ministers to their spiritual needs.

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Now, how many pastors should a local church have? As many as God has called and equipped according to the church's need. There is no specific number in the New Testament.
[24:12] Depending on the church, some pastors are employed full-time, some are bivocational, and some volunteer in the role. But either way, pastors should be called and identified by their church to serve in this biblical role as servant leaders for the faith family.

Okay, so biblically, a local church is to be ruled by Christ, led by pastors, and served by deacons. Okay, for this, keep a finger there in Titus chapter 2, but turn back to Acts chapter 6, verses 1 through 7. Acts chapter 6, 1 through 7.
Because if pastors are servant leaders charged in their role with specific tasks, what about everything else?
Are pastors meant to carry the entire load of the church by themselves? And what about those needs among the church that are not strictly spiritual?
[25:21] For that, we see Acts chapter 6 beginning in verse 1. Now in these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, it's not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.
But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch.
These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.
Okay, so what's missing from this foundational passage on the office of deacons? What's missing is the word deacon.
[26:43] And why? Well, because much like the term pastor, in the case of deacons, the function dictates the office. So the word deacon comes from the Greek diakonos, which means to serve, or to minister.

And so whereas biblically, pastors are to be servant leaders in the church, those who serve in the office of deacon are to be lead servants in the church.
Deacons serve the physical needs and protect the unity of the church. As modeled in Acts 6, they are to be men of good repute, full of the spirit and wisdom, and set apart or appointed or ordained to the task by the church.
And as with pastor elders, the church should ideally have a plurality of deacons. Not just one deacon, but a council of deacons. And how many deacons should a church have?
Well, as many as God has equipped and the church needs. And now deacons are not just good guys, or handymen, or yes-men for the pastors.
[28:01] No, they are biblically qualified and identified according to 1 Timothy 3, 8-13, which says, deacons likewise must be dignified.

Not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, and let them also be tested first, then let them serve as deacons, if they prove themselves blameless.
Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.
For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves, and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Okay, now there's a lot there, but according to this text, just as we saw with pastors, a deacon's character matters, verse eight.
Their faith, verse nine, their endurance, verse ten, their families, verses eleven through twelve, and their work, verse thirteen, matters.
[29:21] Meeting physical needs is still spiritual work, and in the church it is necessary work, especially for those among the church who require greater assistance.

As such, deacons often serve with widows, or homebound members, or senior adults. They also help serve alongside the pastors in ways that protect the unity of the body.
Okay, so a local church should be ruled by Christ, led by pastors, served by deacons, yet pastors and deacons aren't the only ones with a calling and gifting and responsibility in the church.

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Far from it. The members themselves serve just as, if not a more important role in leading the church.
It's Ephesians 4.11. It says he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.
[30:40] So a church's doctrine, its ministry, and its mission are ultimately affirmed and exercised by its members. Okay, so for members, go back to Titus 2.

We're going to look at verses 2 through 14. Now in this passage, and many others like it, we see that leadership or service in the church are not just for those with titles.
A church member is a role and an office with incredibly important covenant responsibilities, expectations, accountability, and function.
Now church members are identified as baptized believers who give a credible profession of faith in Christ according to the gospel and agree to unite together with a specific local body.
And so what we see in the scripture is that no matter who you are or what your equipping is, what your strengths or weaknesses may be or what age or stage of life you are in, if you are a church member, you have a vital role to play in the church.
[32:04] Because in this same letter about putting the church in order for resilience and faithfulness, Paul continues. We'll pick up in verse 2. Older men are to be sober minded, dignified, self- controlled, sound in faith and love and steadfastness.

Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self- controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.
Bond servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.
So from this passage, we see that just like pastors, just like deacons, according to verses 2 through 3, a church member's character matters.
[33:34] From verses 4 through 6, we see that their influence matters. From verses 7 through 10, we see that their Christian walk matters.

The local church is a body comprised of individual members that are given beautifully for and with one another that they might grow individually and collectively to be more like Christ, who is their head.
That is God's design for His church. We see this in Romans 12, 4 through 8. It says, For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another.
So having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in His teaching, the one who exhorts in His exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.
And we see this beautifully displayed in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 14 through 22 and verse 27. It says, For the body does not consist of one member, but of many.
[35:02] If the foot should say, Well, because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body. Well, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, Because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body.

That would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? Because as it is, God has arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose.
If all were a single member, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.
Nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

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So while the church's pastors and deacons have roles to lead and serve the body, it is ultimately the body itself that makes up the church, serving as its hands and feet together in the church and in the world.
[36:19] Now ultimately, the church matters because the gospel matters. Because after outlining to Titus the need for pastor, elders, and the necessity for the members of the church to work with and for one another, Paul concludes with this.

Chapter 2, verses 11 through 14. He says, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
That is why the church exists. And that is why, as far as it depends on us and our local churches, we should want to align ourselves with the structure of a local church according to God's will and way that we might be effective as his people, trusting and following Jesus together.
That the good news of the gospel may be known and brilliantly displayed for the glory of God and the good of his church. This is the call of the church's membership.
This is the call of the church's leadership. And this is the call of the local church together. Father, let's pray.
[38:15] Oh God, we thank you above all things for the gospel of Jesus Christ. That you and you alone are our head. You lead us, you guide us, you fill us with truth, you give us purpose, you give us design.

And all of these things sovereignly to spread the gospel, to share the truth amongst a world that does not want to know the truth, that does not want to follow you by grace through faith.
But God, we pray that through our churches, for our pastors, for our deacons, for our members, God, that you would equip them fully and that you would give them a sense of joy in your word and in the gospel, a sense of urgency that we might share with those who do not know.
God, all of this we ask and we thank you for your design and for your purposes. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen. Let's stand together and worship.
May we follow Christ together. Become thou fount of every blessing Tune my heart to sing thy grace Streams of mercy never ceasing Call for songs of loudest praise Teach me some melodious sonnet Sung by flaming tongues above Praise the mount I'm fixed upon It mount of thy redeeming love So here I raise my ebony Ebeneser Hither by thy help I come
[40:28] And I hope by thy good pleasure Safely to arrive at home Jesus sought me when a stranger Wandering from the fold of God He to rescue me from danger Interposed his precious blood And oh to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be And oh to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be Let thy goodness like a fetter

Bind my wandering heart too Cause I know I'm prone to wonder Lord I feel it I'm prone to lead the God I love So here's my heart Lord Take and seal it Seal it for thy courts above Oh here's my heart Lord Take and seal it Seal it for thy courts above Let's pray God we thank you That though we are prone to wonder Lord We do feel it That you've given us Christ as our head You've given us pastors to serve us And shepherd us With the gospel That we would grow up into you Looking more and more and more like the image of Christ
Thank you for the deacons that you've given to serve us To encourage us That when our physical circumstances distract us and cause us And give us reason to despair and to want to wonder That we are brought back to the gospel But I'm thankful most of all That in simple and faithful healthy church membership We together can proclaim these truths And be so encouraged to press on Until we safely arrive at home Lead us on Christ We pray in your name Amen Amen you can be seated for just a moment We've been well fed this morning So Ryan thank you so much for your teaching on the church in Hurley Thank you so much for your attention

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