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And amen. If we could, continue our standing. We're going to go to the book of Hosea this morning. Hosea chapter number 4, verse number 9. Hosea chapter number 4, verse number 9. Hosea chapter 4, verse number 9.

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As you turn there, we're kind of stepping away just today from our study of the book of Nehemiah, which is where we have been camped out at. And we will pick up our study next week. But today is the day that we set aside for something special here within this local body of believers.

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And so pray for me as the word comes forward this morning as we continue to honor our Savior and Lord. So with that being said, Hosea chapter number 4 and verse number 9, I'm only going to read a portion of that verse. verse, and it shall be like people, like priests, and it shall be like people, like

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priests. Father, thank you for the reading of your Word and just pray Lord that you will guide your servant this morning for your glory. In Jesus name we pray, Amen. You can be seated. This morning as I said we're stepping away from our study of Nehemiah to focus on the Lord's setting aside of several men for service within this local church body.

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This morning is not the beginning of something new, but rather a continuation of Jesus' response to Peter when he confessed him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus says in Matthew chapter number 16, verse number 17, he said, blessed are you, Simon Barhona, for flesh and blood

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is not revealed as to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter. And on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Beloved, from the day the Lord called me to go and preach, I've been blessed to be used in the building of his church,

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and it's been a blessed pleasure to serve as his under-rower in this process. I want you to key in on the word process. Webster's defines it as a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end. We know because of our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection,

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which is the chief cornerstone of our faith, our Lord established his church. And on that foundation, he has chosen to work through mankind and building his spiritual house, which is the church. It's only a process because the Lord continues to add to His church daily.

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Now if you give me a few minutes this morning, I believe the Holy Spirit will give us some understanding into our opening verse as it relates to the Lord's appointment of men who will stand before you in obedience to the Lord's call to serve as elders within this local body of believers. So with that in mind, I'm going to turn us over to Titus chapter number one. Now if you're familiar, Titus and 1 and 2 Timothy are penned by Paul.

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Men, he's penned this letter to men who were serving as pastor's elders in the church. And I'll explain this a little bit more. As you'll hear me talk about, you'll hear the term pastor and you'll hear the term elder. The Holy Spirit has given to the church

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an order in which things are to flow. So in Titus chapter number 1, verse number 5, I want to read this verse. For this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you. Now the Gospel has been preached and it's been preached in Crete and many have come to saving faith.

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However, it appears at this point the churches, which is the gathering of believers, were in need of setting some things in order by establishing elders within the church. Paul sent Titus to Crete for this purpose. The language is clear that part of the order needed within the church was the appointment of elders, that is, men within the local body to lead.

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The question can be asked, why are they needed? And who are these elders? And where do they come from? And what purpose do they serve in the church? Questions I've asked myself. So with that in mind, to give you a little background,

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first, looking at the role of elder. It's not specific to the New Testament. The origin of this role is not actually given in Scripture. However, it's clear that it existed outside of Israel and outside of the Old Testament. The basic criteria for an elder was age.

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The focus was experience and wisdom that came with being older. We see in Genesis chapter number 50 when Joseph goes to bury his father, in Genesis 57 it says, "...so Joseph went up to bury his father. With him went all the servants of Pharaoh,

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the elders of his household, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, as well as the household of Joseph, his brothers and his father's household." Elders were prominent. They were prominent in the Old Testament,

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and they were prominent in Judaism. They were often the heads of tribes or families, and again, because of their age and experience, they were revered and looked to as leaders within Israel. Now we know as we go through the Old Testament, the elders were used to help lead Israel. In fact, during their wilderness wandering, Moses appointed 70 elders to help him in the judging of disputes or offering counsel to the people.

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So it's clear the elders were to provide leadership among the nation of Israel. Baker says this, the key duties of the elder could be summarized as being the twofold task of judging and disciplining generally, and of ruling and guiding the people in an orderly way.

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In this manner, the elders were to be in God's service and to be instrumental for the preservation of life with God in the covenant community. So while we aren't given the origin of this role in Scripture, we clearly see this was a form of leadership that was present in the beginning with God's people. And this leadership, when it carried over into the Judaism of Jesus' day, we see it as it was the elders of Israel who often standing with the high priest who opposed Jesus in his earthly ministry. to the New Testament, the first use of elder is in Acts 11,

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as money was being sent to the elders for the poor saints in Judea. There's no mention as to, again, how these elders came to be within the church. One can only conclude this was the pattern already used for leadership within Judaism.

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Here's what we can say. It's clear that the role elder wasn't just adopted without change in regards to its character and function within the New Testament

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church.

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And it's with that part in mind I want to take a closer look at the word Elder. It's translated Presbyteros. Gives us our English word Presbyter. Now, we've already said that the Elder was somebody who was advanced in years.

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In fact, in the secular practice in Greek political community, it was always the older men who were looked to. But in this context, Titus, it has everything to do with spiritual maturity and character, not age. As a matter of fact, this is clear when we look at one of Paul's pastoral epistles, where

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he says in 1 Timothy 4, 12, writing to the young pastor Timothy, let no one despise you for your youth. But set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching."

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We know that in the beginning of this letter, chapter 1, verse 3, we see that his appointment to preach and teach, that was Timothy's role. So now we get to Titus, and he is in Crete. And Paul says he's there to set things in order that is to establish elders mature men in Christ Jesus who would serve in the

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directing of the church it's clear the wisdom that is needed here is not merely that of age but a spiritual maturity the fact that Paul instructed Titus to set things in order implies the function of an elder is necessary to make sure you key in on that. It's necessary. With that said, we're not instructed on how the Lord desires.

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We're now being instructed on how the Lord desires to order his church. As a matter of fact, the scriptures do tell us exactly how we are to be, how we are to be as a church, and how we are to be as believers.

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That's why 2 Timothy 3.16 says, all scripture is God-breathed. It's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I want you to keep this in mind. Kind of out of my comfort zone, so to speak,

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because I'm usually just marching through a book. And as I go to different sections of the book, I get excited. And the next chapter, Nehemiah chapter number 9, is talking about repentance. And boy, do I love to dig in, and you guys know me.

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So to know that I had to hold for just a second and couldn't get in nobody's business bothers your brother a little bit, but that's OK. We'll get there next week. But this is important, and this has been a long time coming. And so I want to just make sure that we're all on the same page as we turn to the scriptures

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Because there are two roles that are given for directing the body of Christ within the church And this brings us back to Paul's letters Titus and Timothy It's here the roles of elders and deacons are not only identified as leading roles within the church, but qualifications are given Now before we turn to Timothy again, I want to go back to that term elder for a second As you see throughout scripture, you'll quickly find that the word elder, shepherd, overseer, they're all synonymous with one another,

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thus speaking to the same role. We see it in Acts chapter number 20. Paul summons the elders from Ephesus up to Miletus, where he meets them. He's going to be seeing them for the last time. And Paul says in Acts chapter 20, verse number 28,

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therefore, take heed to yourself unto all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." Note that Paul calls the elders overseers. Note that he charges them to shepherd the flock of God.

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The three different terms are used in a way that appear to focus on different aspects of the same role within the church. And we've already established that the word elder implied maturity in regards to spiritual wisdom in the way Titus is using it.

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However, the word shepherd, poema, which is translated pastor, Ephesians chapter 4, verse number 11, it has its focus on nurturing, guiding, and protecting, whereas the word overseer speaks to providing oversight, direction for the flock of God. So the role of elder is providing wisdom, protection, direction, nurturing, and oversight to the flock of God, which is the church now Peter paints an amazing picture of this in first Peter 5 1 where he says so I exhort the elders among you as a fellow

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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 not for shameful gain but eagerly not Domineering over those in your charge with being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory Should think about what Peter is saying when you consider elders in the church is important to remember the Holy Spirit has provided

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Them to provide oversight to shepherd the body listen. There's a way in which elders are supposed to function. They are to be men who are not doing it so as to lord over people. They are to be those who are not doing it so that they can be seen. They're not dominating over other people. They're to be examples to the flock. And so Peter is laying it out as a fellow elder himself. And so we see that the Holy Spirit has appointed certain people, certain men within the body. This truth is clearly confirmed in both Paul and Peter's writings.

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So what I want to do this morning is I want to talk about what's expected. See, much is expected today in regards to the role of an elder and pastor. And again, when I say elder, pastor, synonymous terms. Make sure that we understand that.

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Many people today, when they think about an elder or pastor, their focus is leadership. In fact, that has become the way elders and local church pastors are chosen today. Leadership is the rage in our secular society, from seminars to books to speakers to conferences, all abounding in regards to leadership.

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I can tell you people will walk up to me and they'll say, Pastor Will, I got this book on leadership for you. What are you telling me? Why don't you just look it over, okay? Hey, maybe this might help you out. Hey, have you heard about this?

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There's this conference over here. There's this that you need to go check out. Everything's on, I mean, leadership is everything. But it's interesting to me, right? Because I see it, and it is all the rage in the world, but now the sad truth is it's all the rage inside the church. What if I told you that the true mark of a godly leader isn't his leadership acumen?

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Everyone thinks that it is, but it isn't. It's the content of his character. If you really want to know what a leader in the church looks like, if you're looking to see how well he can organize, how well he can put things together, how well he can lead, you're missing the picture. We have to make sure that we understand what God has called a man to, not what man is calling man to. Those are two totally different things. You see, we're not building an organization, we're living in an organism.

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And we need to understand that God's the one that's directing and God's the one that's leading. So when we begin to think about men that are being called as elders, we have to begin to think not like the world, but like God. The true mark has always been that of character. Now, I want you to keep this in mind as we begin to go through. I'm not going to be before you long because of the nature of our service this morning.

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But since we know that the Lord doesn't give us the order, he does give us the qualifications. And so when you get to first Timothy, chapter three, verse number one, I want to read this to you through verse five. This saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach. The husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-control, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not coercive, not

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a lover of money. He must manage his own household well with all dignity keeping his children's submission. 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 or 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 and to a snare of the devil Listen a lot of people avoid studying Timothy and Titus and they say well those you know, those are those are for elders.

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They only seem to want to review those things when they want to discuss eldership or the qualifications for a person. But I wonder how closely do we look at the qualifications? Have you ever noticed that with the exception of being apt to teach and not being a new convert, those are the only two qualities that are specific to an elder. In fact, all the other qualities that are listed

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are to be found in the believer. And you see them throughout scripture. So the reality is, is that Paul is saying an elder must first be a faithful man of God, first and foremost. We immediately go and say, well, is he apt to teach? What about the other eight things that he spoke about?

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And so we seem to miss the boat. You see, when you start thinking about what an elder is supposed to be, when you go to Timothy and Titus, this is saying the bare minimum. This doesn't say he needs to reach this, it needs to say he needs to be a bare minimum, he needs to be this before he can even be considered to be a person who could be

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faithful in the house of God. And so often what we do is we seem like the man of God is up here, so does that mean that I don't have to be hospitable, I don't have to practice self-control, I don't have to do this, I don't have to... In other words, as a Christian, what is God calling me to be? And I think that sometimes we have this pedestal that we like to put people on,

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especially elders, especially pastors. And to be perfectly honest with you, I don't know why, because I'm a man just like you. I got the same problems, the same struggles, and the same things going on in my life, and I'm seeking the same God just like you.

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And so it's understanding that when we begin to understand that, we begin to see leadership in a different way. And this is the picture that I want to paint for you this morning as it regards to the elders here within this local body of believers.

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They are to be an example to the flock. Let me tell you what leadership isn't, or better yet, what eldership isn't. One's ability to be able to cast a vision. I'm so sick and tired of people asking me, what the heck is my vision?

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2020, next question. And so it's like, hey, what's your vision? What's your mission from the church? Oh, as if Jesus left one for somebody and left 20 for everybody else. It's the same one as the Lord, to seek and save

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that which is lost. You see, we get caught up and what happens is we start expecting that from the leadership But we miss the boat It isn't about the ability to be able to cast the right vision or to command a room It's based on a man's character before a holy God Listen an elder may have a master's in divinity or not

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He may be a great orator or not You want to know the only thing that is non-negotiable according to Paul his character? It's the only thing that's non-negotiable. Sometimes we look at the wrong thing. I sent out a Evaluation on myself to the ministry leaders here Yeah, y'all know y'all know what y'all put down there for a brother. And so I sent one out and my kid said, what led you to do that? Like did somebody ask you to do it? I said, no, I just felt like that's what the Lord was telling

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me to do. I beat up on people so I'm not going to beat up on them. And so I sent it out. You want to know where I scored the weakest? In leadership. Now hold on, let me clear something up. When I say weakest, all right, there was excellent, there was good, there was need improvement, and it was poor. I stayed in the good area, okay? But I'm a brother who likes to see some A's jumping off, all right? So I'm looking at it, I'm like, well good, why ain't it excellent? So I'm looking at it, right? But if you looked at the preaching and teaching portion,

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it was excellent. And so there were certain things that I was scored very well on, other things that I was told that I need to work on. And so I thought about it. And in fact, my wife, I was sitting,

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reading through some of them late into the night. And she was like, she said, why do you do that to yourself? Like, why do you pay so much? I said no I always want to look at places where I can improve But what I was pleased to see is that when it comes to who I am as a servant of God

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Those things they were able to see Christ See the Bible says that we are to be an example to the flock that is we must model Christ an example of mature Christian character you see if I can't explain this a little bit more you remember Israel they wanted a king and Samuel thought they were jet rejecting him and the Lord said they're not rejecting you they're rejecting me and after telling them everything that the King's gonna do to him. They still said, Bet, give

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us a king anyway. And so the Scriptures record in 1st Samuel 9 too, they found Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. I like this, from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people. Saul looked apart, but later we see his heart. Not only does he disobey God, but he was more concerned with his honor before the people,

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when the kingdom was being ripped from him, than he was in reverencing a holy God. What I found interesting is when we get to 1 Samuel 15, the Lord calls upon Samuel to go to find a king to replace Saul. He enters the house of Jesse. It's interesting to me as Samuel comes to Jesse's home and his sons begin to pass before him. As soon as the first son passes before

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him, the Lord says to Samuel, do not look on his appearance or on his height of his stature because I rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Listen, Jesse had seven sons pass before Samuel and the Lord rejected each and every one. Leading Samuel to ask a question, 1611, 1 Samuel, there remains, he asked him, do you have any more sons? And he says, there remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here? And he sent. And he brought him in. Now he was Rudy.

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Red. Had a beautiful eyes. Handsome. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him. For this is he. Think about that. Listen, all the other sons came out and they all looked apart. These are the ones we must choose. The Lord says you're not

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seeing right. See, we have this view of great leaders and they're often ones that look the part. They are head and shoulders above anywhere else, anyone else. Listen, their resume, their ability to be able to cast vision, their education. These are the things that seal the deal. You want to know what I find interesting? Is that we're looking for the very thing God kept rejecting. It's interesting to me. At breakfast with the gentleman this week, we got a chance to share stories.

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And I left that meeting after listening to him speak and myself sharing. And sometimes it's interesting to me. You can look at a person's resume in terms of what you think they are. And you can sit across from somebody, listen to them,

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and you can see exactly who they are. And I left that meeting more blessed than I did when I walked in the door, because I got a chance to see a person's heart. See, we need to change how we view leadership, and we need to change how we treat leadership. It is it's not the job of the elder or the pastor to figure out how to

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build a jungle gym for the kids in the children's ministry. It is not the job to try to figure out how we have the best singles ministry. How do we help the church with its finances? To put on the Dave Ramsey show? I'm not saying you can't do these things. What I'm saying is that if that's what you're looking for, then you're looking in the wrong place. Because the man of God is called to lead the people of God for the glory of God so that they can worship God. That's what it comes down to.

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And sometimes we lose sight of that. And so sometimes what we have a tendency to do as a body is we put something upon the elders and the pastors and the teachers of the church that, quite frankly, the Lord hasn't put on them. And so we need to make sure that we understand,

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what does this role look like? Well, clearly, we see that when we go to scripture, it looks like David. What's so interesting to me is as I sit and I think about this, the Lord rejected those who looked apart, but he shared his heart with the ones who don't.

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Kind of reminds me of Nehemiah the cupbearer. God shared his heart with Nehemiah.

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Why?

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Because Nehemiah's heart was for God. Beloved, the Lord didn't call me because I was smarter than most. He didn't call me because I was more educated than most. He didn't call me because I was a greater speaker than most. He did call me because I'm more handsome than Pyrus. That's only because Pyrus put that on the evaluation and he was more handsome

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than me. He gave me nothing but excellent on preaching and he said the only thing is he isn't as handsome as he thinks he is. I want us all to understand something. As we sit back and we take a look at what's going on, God shares his heart. I want you to think about this as relates to David. When the Lord found David, he said he's the one. When David was anointed, when David found himself running from Saul and hiding in caves, it's interesting to me that after the Lord had removed the kingdom from Saul,

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and David's running and ducking and dodging, then all of a sudden he becomes king, and he begins to have victory after victory after victory. This was the man after God's own heart. But it's interesting, when David stopped following, when he got comfortable, you ready for this? When his leadership was without question, that's when he fell.

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When his leadership was out without question, here's what I mean. King David, the great leader and conqueror, stood in his palace. Instead of being out at war serving the people, he stopped following, and he fell. However, interesting to me that when he was simply

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the boy shepherding the sheep, God said, He's the one. Isn't that amazing? When all he was was the boy shepherding the sheep, He said, that's Him. Let me tell you something, leadership can do a number on you if you stop following the Lord. So the picture that I get when I see this, and I sit back and I look, it's not that there's a problem with leadership,

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but when leadership begins to take hold of the person who's called to follow, it becomes a problem. And can I be honest with you? It can become the God of your life. And you can begin to idol it.

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We know David. We know his repentance, but I pray a picture is starting to develop before you this morning. You see, as these men will come before you today, they're like David. These are men who have been tending to the sheep of this flock. These men aren't before you often preaching or teaching, yet they are like David

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Shepherding out back the flock of God It's these men that the Lord has been saying they are the ones So often people think that pastor will is the only one leading in this local church But if you were to ask me that question and somehow I Would say come with me on back because I'd like for you to meet Ralph.

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He's been serving in this body with me for a while. He's been walking side by side with me for years. I think this body would have imploded had he not been here. I'm indebted to him in ways that he will never know. So often, people just see me. And they don't know the person who will pick up the phone and call and tell me, hey, what are you doing? The person that will come alongside and say, hey, hey,

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hey, hey, I need you to calm down. A person who will walk alongside somebody when I'm done,

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he's not.

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A person has taught me more about patience than anybody I know. And so I haven't been leading this church by myself. I never have. God has always had a man standing next to me. But that man has more than anything

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anybody has ever known. And so as I stand before you this morning, and as we begin to watch other men begin to lead, I need you to know, people say, Pastor Will, Pastor Will, Pastor Will, Pastor Will,

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but Pastor Ralph

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is everything this body has ever needed and will always need He doesn't desire to be up front. She's not trying to be seen. I Got a beg him to talk

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And yet she's been here every single step of the way

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And so I need us to understand that the model that the Lord had me looking for was never me. It was always Him. He was the model. He is what I've been praying, Lord. This is what the body needs. Send men like Him. Listen, I'm more like Peter. Foot in mouth, insert here, okay? And I know that. But I knew that when I kept looking, and my wife kept saying, what are you looking for? I said, a man of character, a man like Ralph.

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And so God has blessed us with those men, men who consistently aren't trying to be up front, men who desire to see God at work in the lives of others. Those who desire to give back. Now one thing I want to say, when Paul speaks about elders, he's speaking about men. This is consistent with the role given back in the garden by the Lord God. This isn't an issue of equality, but rather a matter of order.

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Remember, he told Titus to set things in order. Just as man was called to lead in the garden, headship is his role in his home and in the church. This does not mean that women have no leadership role within the church. Simply put, it means the primary role

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of servant leadership in the church is that of elders and deacons and these rules are male-oriented As the qualifications of being the husband of one wife makes clear I Only bring this out for clarity's sake The other bit of guidance we receive is an instruction that a man cannot be a recent convert now

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If you think about this it walks with what Paul says concerning deacons. He says, first, let them be tested, then let them serve.

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Later, in Paul's letter to Timothy,

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he writes, don't lay hands on them quickly. What are we to take from this?

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It's clear.

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We're to be patient as the Holy Spirit leads and appointing men to eldership. The men before you today have been walking through this process for the last couple of years, and the reason is simple. A man's character is revealed in time.

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A man's character is revealed through trials. A man's character is revealed through disagreements and personal struggles. Those work to reveal the character of a man. This process has tested me in ways I've never been tested before I Have wrestled with myself. I have cried out to the Lord. I found myself in tears Just asking him to give me direction

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Some of asked me why was it so hard and it's simple because I love you guys Really what it comes down to I love the church and I love the Lord It doesn't belong to me. It belongs to him. But I know I've been entrusted with the stewardship to act as an under shepherd for the chief shepherd, our Savior and Lord Jesus. So my desire was to hear from the Lord. Because one day I will stand before the Lord. Listen, I've been questioned about everything under the sun.

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Why are you moving so slow? Why is it taking so long? What's wrong with this person? What about this? What about that? You sure you're right.

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You're making it about you. You're making it about this. You're making it about that. I've heard so many different things over the years. And to be honest with you, I'm human like everybody else, right? You start to look at yourself and think, okay,

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am I missing something? Am I, am I not this? I'm not that. Listen, I'm not your standard run-of-the-mill kind of dude. You know, I didn't say, hey, I love the Lord. Let me run off to seminary.

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Then let me go ahead and put some things out there. And let me go through the program. And then let the Lord tell me how to preach. I'm not that dude. I never have been. And when it comes to church and order and structure,

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there are some things I follow. But I don't follow traditions of men. I don't set up the church a certain way according to what people say I'm supposed to do. And so I follow the leading of the Lord from day one and don't plan on stopping until the day He calls me home. And so I don't always look like the church down the street.

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I don't always function like the church down the street. I always do what the church down the street does. And that's not to take a shot at the church down the street. It's just to say that dudes like me usually don't fit in places like that. But it's OK.

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Last time I checked, neither did the 12. But what I do know is that he's always choosing the foolish things of this world to confound the wise. And oh, I say, truly, when he chose you, he was doing a good work.

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And so, the picture is really, really clear.

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It's that I see Him at work in ways I've gotten it wrong. There's times where this is the right thing, this is the right move. And I've set back. But I'm also not the man I am today, the man I was a couple of years ago, that I am today. You know, Vaughan says, Christian ministry is a work, it's no pastime it is no outside perfunctory Priority is a work be able to say I'm an elder of Christ Church and therefore my time my strength made life is is the churches

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It's Christ Being an elder is work men are called to for shepherding is not passive but active duty Which takes me back to where I started. And it shall be like people, like priests. The context is that the priests had acted corruptly, and they were being punished by their disobedience,

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just as the people were acting corruptly and were being punished by the Lord. The picture, like people, like priests. What we see is that Israel's character never rules above the character of their leaders, which is why character matters. Which is why it's important that the men that we have before us

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are the men who have a character that resembles that of our Savior and Lord. Which is why the character was the one thing that we see that is non-negotiable. Why? Because we're called to imitate the faith of these men. Like priest, like people, like priest. See, sometimes we lose sight that the priest's role wasn't to make the place holy so God could come to the people. Priests were functioning for him.

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Elders, pastors, ministry leaders, sometimes we get caught up in functioning for the people. That's not the role. And so our job is to make it so that the people, so that the place, so that where we are is holy, so that God can come where we are.

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It's all about him. And this is the picture. And when that's the character, then like people, like priest, that will be the character of the body. And this is the direction that the Lord is calling us to, to be able to imitate the faith of these men.

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The role of shepherding is all-encompassing. So I'd like to just say a word to the men who will be standing before you here in just a second. As elders, as deacon, men, all you need to do is follow the chief shepherd.

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This is what's important. It's not, as you've already heard me say this great leadership acumen But it's being able to serve Perfect example of that is Matthew 9 35 and Jesus He went through all the cities and villages teaching in all their synagogues He proclaim in the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction

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When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them because they are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd shepherd. Men, we often hear that sheep are vulnerable, they're this, they're that, and all those things are true. But the part that has taken me so long is the part where we talk about caring.

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Let me see if I can't paint a picture before I end. A true elder who shepherds provides care. For instance, sheep are really prone to disease, actually require constant care. There's a disease known as fly strike, where flies get into the dirty wool and wool wounds of a sheep

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and they begin to lay eggs. And then the maggots begin to bury underneath the wool. Calm down, ladies.

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It's OK.

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And the shepherd has to pay close enough attention so that he can attend to it so that he can care for it He has to make sure he keeps the wool clean the skin clean He has to pay close attention. Not only that sheep were picky about where they eat The shepherd has to make sure that the mud or the water puddles in the pastures are free of bacteria that causes this thing called foot rot. So which means the shepherd needs

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to make sure that he knows the area in which the sheep are grazing. And men, sometimes they struggle to get up. In fact, if they're tipped over on their back, they can't. Often that's due to either pregnancy or basic overeating. And can I tell you, there's actually

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a parasite in sheep that caused them to actually overeat. So I want you to get this picture. Because I'm talking to you men this morning. Care is needed. Care outside of yourself. Care that says that I'm willing to put everything else for the Lord first.

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There's a level of involvement an elder has in shepherding the sheep in his care. Remember, the church doesn't belong to you. It doesn't belong to me. It belongs to the Lord. And we're appointed as servant leaders. Can I tell you something?

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It's not leadership, it's followership. If you can't follow, you can't lead. Plain and simple. Your greatest leader knows how to follow. Our role as shepherding elders through the Holy Spirit who is guiding and empowering us is to care.

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It is to teach. It is to lead. It is to guide. And if you want to know to what extent, men, as you stand before this body this morning, Jesus tells you to what extent.

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John 10, 11, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who has a hired hand and not a shepherd who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

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He flees because he's a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Just as the father knows me, I know the father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

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The reason why it's taking me so long is because I never wanted to put anybody before you who wouldn't be willing to die for you, who wouldn't be willing to put you first. Listen, I get it. We got families, we got jobs,

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we got all this kind of stuff. But I'm gonna say this as I heard a brother say it just the other day, and I couldn't agree more because I've said it a hundred times as I preach, God, family, ministry, lie. The scriptures don't teach that, it's God.

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You guys have heard me say it a hundred times over. Why? Because in Christ, you cannot care for the church if you can't care for your home. In Christ, he tells you to love your neighbor greater than you love yourself. You don't have to set out what it looks like.

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All you have to do is be in him and he will direct you to what it will be like. And this has been the call for every elder. We love to script things and put things in order back to having the right leadership acumen and being able to put things in simple one, two, three, four.

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Let me tell you, it don't work like that. Ask my family. There's been many times where I've been present and there's many times where I have not been. My grandson was having a birthday party this past Saturday and I was at home college football kickoff sermon was done

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and my daughter calls and she says are you coming and for once I didn't have a Bible study to do I wasn't meeting with anybody I had nothing going on and I was like yeah don't sound excited no I'm excited to come but sometimes you just want a moment You just want a moment. No one was in my house, but me The wife was gone the women said he when I say no one was home a brother was walking brother Just walking around the house. I was feeling good on Saturday morning

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I ain't gonna lie y'all probably want to walk in the house and I wasn't appropriate but I brothers why that this is my house Okay. All right my house. All right, then so I was having a good time I was enjoying it because it doesn't happen often right where I have a moment I left went to the party and before I could even get back home I was working on a few other things that started to happen and it's okay I'm okay with that God gave me that morning he didn't tell me he was gonna give me the afternoon and so I flow the way he calls me to, not the way I want to.

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Men, you're gonna have to take this charge because it's not for me. If you wanna know to what extent the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, you have to trust that God has your family greater than you do because he does.

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And so is sacrifice involved?

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Of course it is.

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God's not asking you to do him a favor As he appoints he's asked you to be willing to lay down your life Now your wives might take your wife's for their life for you, but it's okay. All right I'm asking you to think about what's being said Let me give you these passages scripture and we'll close John 10, 27, my sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me.

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The elder, the shepherd, the overseer, he knows his sheep. Please key in on the word, know. There's nothing worse than being in a body of believers and no one knows who the elder, who the pastor, who the minister is. You should want to know those the Lord has called you to come alongside. John 10 3, to him the gatekeeper opens, the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

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Know that he oversees as he calls them. Isaiah 40 and 11, he will tend his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom and greatly lead those that are with young. The elder, the shepherd, the overseer, he gathers and nurtures. Psalms 23.3, he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake.

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The elder, the shepherd, the overseer, like the chief's shepherd, he guides. Psalms 23.1, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The elder, the shepherd, the overseer, feeds, Jesus speaking to John at the end of John's letter. And he's speaking to Peter, rather.

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And Peter asked him three times. Peter's being, as I should say, reaffirmed by speaking to Jesus. And what does the Lord do? You love me? He says, yeah, feed my sheep.

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Jeremiah 31, 10, hear the word of the Lord, O nation,

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and declare it in the coastlands far and away. Say, he who has scattered Israel will gather him, and he will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock the elder the shepherd the overseer he protects and finally John 10 11 I am the Good Shepherd and the Good Shepherd lays on his life for the sheep the elder the shepherd the overseer but die for sheep because

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they're not his they're the Lord's the motivation of the elder is not out of obligation or desire to be seen or for profit. The motivation of the elders to be the shepherd of God's flock to show genuine love and compassion to care for the flock as if it were his own. Beloved, speaking to you as the body, the scriptures they charge us to obey the servant leaders, which are the elders, the pastors, the shepherds, the overseers.

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Hebrews 13, 7, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your soul. But there's something very key that you need to remember about this verse. The elder, the shepherd, the overseer will one day answer, because it finishes by saying, as those who will give an account. The reason why you listen is not because they're trying to rule you.

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But they know who they have to give an account to, it's because they love you. And they want to lead and they want to guide you. Because they're watching for your soul. I'll ask Ralph if he'll come up here and join me. See, it debated, do I give this big, long dissertation on eldership?

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Do I break down every component? We would be here until tomorrow. And so I knew that wasn't possible. But what I wanted to do is let you know that the scriptures don't lay out a process, but it does lay out the qualifications.

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The scriptures don't say, this is how you bring people up. But it does say, you need to make sure you take your time. It is clear of what the qualifications are, the content of a man's character. And these are the things that the Lord looks for.

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And so, today on this day, we'll call these men up, they're going to have a moment where they can say a word to you as a body. This, so like the passage of Scripture that says, I haven't been this way before, because I have it, not in this vein.

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But I'm thankful for this day, because I know the Lord is far from done in adding to the men that will lead this body. So with that being said, I have each one come up one by one, beginning with Ezekiel and Jed.

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beginning with Ezekiel and Jed.

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Alright.

Transcribed with Cockatoo