

THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Heavenly Father, we ask that by your grace and your compassion and mercy to us that we would turn our eyes upon Jesus, and that you would remove the frustrations and consternations of this week, that our minds would be focused upon you, and that you'd be pleased, that your Holy Spirit would fulfill his job description of guiding us into all truth, and that once again, we might see the true God of biblical revelation not the god of human imagination. To that end, we just pray, Lord that you'd open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen

We're continuing on a rather long series on the formation and function of the church. We've been looking at Mark Dever's book, *The Essentials of a Healthy Church*. We've examined several of those already, one which would be expository preaching, that is how we are taught. The second essential of the healthy church would be biblical theology, that is what we are taught. The third one was a clear understanding of a biblical gospel. Is it the Gospel of human imagination or the Gospel of biblical revelation? Is it man centered or God centered?

We've spent several weeks on that last topic. Now we want to move into some of the other essentials of the healthy church. I'm doing it a bit different order because I think this one is probably the next most critical one, and that is church leadership.

We need to understand that God always works through a chain of command. From Genesis to Revelation, you'll always see that God works through a structure of a chain of command, which we now, in our vernacular, call leadership. You'll see that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are never in competition with one another. The quick summary of that is what God ordains, what the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies.

There you see a chain of command. You don't see the Holy Spirit saying, "Well I think we ought to do this." No, he gets his marching orders, if you would, from the Son and from the Father. It always runs in a nice, flowing, smooth chain of command. What the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies. In other words, your salvation was planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son and applied to you by the Holy Spirit when God was pleased to present the Gospel of Christ to a true biblical gospel and you came to saving faith through regeneration. That's how it works. What the Father ordains, the Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies.

When we get into church leadership, we're all over the place on this. What I want to do today is just give us an introduction on the biblical standards of leadership. Leadership we need to understand is basically this. It's influencing the behavior of people. Leadership is influencing the behavior of people. You can take two little boys and you can put them in a sandbox, and one little boy will pick up a plastic shovel, hit the other little boy on the head, and the second little boy runs away crying. What do you have? You have leadership. Because what did he do? He influenced the behavior of the second child. That's leadership. That means this, folks. Potentially any time you and I come into a relationship with another person, you are in a leadership position because how you treat them, how you respond, what you do with them will impact one way or the other their conduct. That's leadership.

Now, the example I gave of the two little boys is not good leadership. The end result of leadership is to stand for something that is good. The end result is to stand for something that is good. We in the church stand for something that is good, and that is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the best that we can do. The question is how do I influence people toward the accomplishment of that? Management is different than leadership. Leadership is influencing the behavior of people. Management is influencing

the behavior of people toward the accomplishment of a goal.

Some people are good leaders, but lousy managers. Some people are good managers, but lousy leaders. In the church, there are some qualifications that set us apart to be the perfect balance between a good leader and a good manager because church leadership is really designed to influence the behavior of people toward the accomplishment of a goal, which is the glory of Christ. That is the good that we stand for. The question is who do we put in positions of leadership and management to accomplish our end result, which is the glory of God? All things are done for the glory of God. As Paul writes to the church at Colossae in Corinthians, “Whatever you do, in all things, do it for the glory of God.” That is our end result of leadership in the church.

The world’s standards are quite different. What we have a difficult time in the church is looking at the standards of the world and saying just because there are good standards in the world’s leadership and management position, they can be a good leader or manager in the church.

Today I want us to take a look at a contrast. You have on lesson 10 what I call identification of qualified church leaders. The world around us adopts a traditional approach of looking at what we would call a strong, natural leader. Leadership in the church is based upon certain qualifications that God has qualified. Essentially it means this—who qualifies a leader to serve in the church? God does. That means that you and I as members of a congregation do not appoint leadership. We do not vote leadership in. It’s not a democracy. What God the Father has ordained, the Son accomplishes, the Holy Spirit applies.

We’re going to go through, today, some qualifications of biblical church leadership. God is the one who qualifies somebody for this role. What we do as church members is we recognize that, we identify them and say, “Oh, you are a church leader based upon the biblical qualifications.” I would have to say that most congregations don’t know what are the biblical qualifications because how is it, traditionally, that we go about selecting elders and deacons. You pass out a card and say, “If you think somebody is qualified, write their name on there, and then we’ll have a committee and we’ll go call them and say ‘Would you like to be an elder?’”

Our church has to have 32 elders. The church has to have 12 elders. There’s no magical number. The two churches that I’ve pastored, we had zero elders until the Lord qualified one because we didn’t have a set number, because who am I to say that our church needs 12 or 32 or 50? You have to let the Lord determine that because he qualifies somebody for this role. Now we need to understand the difference between how the world looks at leadership and how the church is called to look at leadership.

In my mind, the next most important thing that a pastor does in his role as the pastor/teacher next to preaching the Gospel and leading worship is training the next generation of leaders. It’s creating and training church leadership.

Let’s take a look at this sheet that I have for you of lesson 10. Several years ago, when I was doing a study on church leadership, I came across this survey that was conducted by Fortune 500 companies, basically saying this is the definition and the qualifications of a strong, natural leader. The tendency we have in the church is to say, “Oh this person is a strong, natural leader in their corporation or their company, therefore, because they had this position there, and they are a good leader or manager in their corporation or company, they are a strong, natural leader, they will do the same in the church.”

We need to recognize that that is not necessarily true. You may be a strong, natural leader in the eyes of the world, and you may be a biblically qualified leader in the church. That may be true. But just because you are a strong, natural leader does not necessarily mean that God has qualified you for church

leadership.

Let's take a look at this. Here was this survey conducted by Fortune 500 companies that said here is the ideal person who's a strong, natural leader. Notice first of all they're a visionary. They always see beyond what's going on. Secondly, they're action oriented. They have to be moving at all times. Again, this is the description of a strong, natural leader according to this survey.

They're courageous. They never lack the guts to say what they think. They're energetic. They're able to handle many things at once. They're objective oriented rather than people oriented. They view people as means of accomplishing their goals. That's the way the world looks at a strong, natural leader. You see, they're so interested in accomplishing the goal that sometimes they use people as the means.

***Audience Member:** That, to me, seems a point of manipulation.*

Oh, it is. No question. That is manipulation. When you have people as the means, you're a manipulator. It's very Machiavellian—the ends justify the means, and so it doesn't matter what happens to the people; it really matters do I accomplish the goal regardless of what happens to the people. Now this is what the world is saying they're looking for in a strong, natural leader. I mean, the board of directors want to hire somebody who's going to bring in the bucks, who's going to make the P&L sheet look better as opposed to what kind of relationships do we have. So quite a contrast.

Then we notice next—pragmatic. They tend to be great protector or the instructor of the people. They're very paternalistic rather. They tend to be the great protector of the goal or the mission of the organization. They're egocentric. Sometimes admittedly, sometimes unknowingly. In other words, you've got to have a strong ego. If you're going to be a strong, natural leader, you've got to have a strong ego so you can take the bullets when they come at you and it doesn't bother you because your ego driven.

They're intolerant of others when they don't measure up to expectations. In other words, when somebody doesn't meet the expectations of the job requirement they're intolerant of that. They're basically saying this is what they want in a leader because their mindset of leadership is really manipulation rather than service.

Lastly, they're considered indispensable, at least they think they are. The leader thinks that they're indispensable. Now that's what the world says is a strong, natural leader. Unfortunately, we've adopted much of that and put it into the framework of church leadership.

The spiritual leader, God has different qualifications for leadership in the church rather than strong, natural leadership. Some of those ingredients may be good and they may be pertinent for someone to be a good church leader, but that's now how you determine somebody's qualified for leadership in the local church.

The world's standards are not our standards. You read about that in Isaiah 55. So therefore, we shouldn't ask church people to be church leaders just based upon their strong, natural position as leaders in this world. They may or may not be successful leaders, but that's not the issue. The issue is how does God qualify one for church leadership? The real issue is maturity.

Let's take a look at the next sheet. There are certain qualifications for elders and there are certain qualifications for deacons. The only two positions that I've ever seen in the Scripture that are leadership positions are two positions that talk about are elders and deacons. I've never seen anything about a trustee. I don't know where that comes from. I guess that comes from the system of this world that says

you've got to have somebody who's going to be responsible. I thought elders were responsible. I thought the deacons were responsible. I'm not saying you shouldn't have them. I'm just saying I've never seen anything biblically that talks about trustees in a church relationship or some other council, whatever you call it. The only leadership positions that we see in the Scripture are elders and deacons. It would seem to me that we need to master that and understand what that is so that we can run our church according to the biblical standard.

There are certain qualifications for elders and certain qualifications for deacons. Let's, first of all, take a look at the elder qualifications. You'll see that on your list. You'll see the passage of the Scripture from the book of Titus 1:5-9. The context of that book is that Paul is writing to a young ministerial protégé, one of the people he's mentoring, and he says, "Here is how you identify people in the church who are qualified for leadership. In other words, you go into the city and you appoint elders. You find that, you look around and see who God has created. God qualifies them. You set them apart for leadership."

Notice some of the qualifications. I've tried to give you the biblical expression under the qualification heading and then a brief explanation of it. We're not going to go into detail on all of these because you can study these yourself. But notice, first of all, one of the qualifications is blameless. That means they have unimpeachable integrity. Are they people of integrity? Secondly, the husband of one wife. What this literally means is he's not a womanizer. He's a one-woman kind of man. It does not eliminate somebody who's divorced per se, or somebody who's a widow, but it basically says they're not a womanizer.

Next having believing children. The children are believers, not unruly or incorrigible. Next you'll see not self-willed. In other words, not arrogantly self-satisfied. Not quick tempered. They're not prone to anger. They're not addicted to wine; in other words, they're not overly fond of wine. They're not wine bibbers or they're not drunks. They're not overly fond; they control themselves. They're not violent. That means they're not quarrelsome or contentious. They're not ones who are contrarian to the point of always wanting to start arguments.

They're not a money lover. They're not greedy for money. In other words, they're not motivated by money. They're hospitable. They're a stranger lover. They're generous to guests. They have a warmth and a compassion for the stranger. They're lovers of good. In other words, loving goodness is part of their motivation. They like to do things and see things that are good.

Several years ago, I was screened to be part of a jury trial. I went down to the court house and the lawyers began to ask me questions. They said, "Are you prejudiced?" I said, "Absolutely." {LAUGHTER} They said, "Well what are your prejudices?" I said, "I like people who love good and don't like people who love evil, so I'm very prejudiced. I like people who are neat versus people who are sloppy. I like people who are good mannered versus people who have poor manners. I've got all kind of prejudices. You want more?" He said, "Do you have any biases?" I said, "I'm the most biased person you know." He said, "What are your biases?" I said, "I like people who do things well as opposed to people who do things poorly. I like people, and I have a prejudice, and I'm very biased toward people who love goodness." "Well," he said, "you're not qualified." {LAUGHTER} So they wrote me off. They said, "You're too prejudiced and too biased," and I said, "Thank you." {LAUGHTER} So I wasn't picked.

But you see, the world looks at things differently. One of the qualifications of a church leader is somebody who loves goodness. You're committed to the goodness. Men, the end result of leadership is what? To stand for something that is good. You want your leadership to be standing for something that is good. So one of the qualifications is the church leader must be committed loving that which is good.

How is goodness defined? Goodness is defined by God himself. When the Pharisees came to Jesus, they said, “Good teacher.” He said, “Why do you say that I’m good. There’s only one good. God is good.” You see, what that really means is the church leader really loves God because God is the standard of all goodness. Does the person really love God and stand for that? The end result of leadership is to stand for something that is good.

Next we see they’re self-controlled. Sensible. Self-controlled. They’re sane. They’re tempered. They maintain self-control. They have themselves under self-control. They’re upright. That means they’re just, righteous; they’re aligned with that which is right. That which is right is defined by the Scripture. They’re holy, responsible in fulfilling moral obligations to God and man. It means they understand they’ve been set apart for a unique purpose.

Holiness is the word *hagios*. It means to be set apart. So the person realizes, “I’m set apart to do something specific that is just and righteous,” and the person is committed to that. They’re disciplined. They’re restrained. They’re under control. They’re holding to the Word. They call others to wholeness through teaching God’s Word. They have the ability to teach and to answer the questions.

We’re going to get into, specifically, more on what the elders do when they really labor in Word and doctrine. Essentially, that’s the role of the elder is to labor in Word and doctrine. If you don’t like the Scriptures, you’re not qualified for an elder. It’s your whole guideline is to stand for that which is good. It’s the Scripture. Able to refute objections, convincing those who speak against the truth, you’re able to take them on and have a good conversation, controllable conversation, but refute their errors.

You see, that’s why the people in the church need to realize it’s more than just one pastor/teacher. There’s a plurality of elders that you can go to different men in the church to deal with some of these issues. But you see, one of the real primary responsibilities of the qualification of an elder is to be able to refute error in the church. That’s why they have to be a lover of truth. They have to be committed to the Scripture. That’s why your training church leadership, you have to teach them how to study the Scripture because that’s one of their primary roles. The primary role of an elder is this—to labor in Word and doctrine, not sit around and talk about the color of church signs. Elders don’t sit around and talk about the color of exit signs. They sit around and talk about the truth of the Scripture and how can we refute the errors that are permeating our church. That’s part of the role of the elder.

Now you have to be qualified to do that. You may be a strong, natural leader and have some of those spiritual qualifications, but you don’t pick the person just because they’re a strong, natural leader. You pick them because of this—picking means you identify them. We don’t go pick people; we identify who God has qualified. Who qualifies church leaders? It is not us. God qualifies the church leader. We just recognize them and we set them apart.

So there you have a list from the book of Titus. There are some additional ones in the book of Timothy. First of all, they desire the office. Several times, people in my church, when they go start picking their elders, they come to me and say, “We think you’d be a good elder.” I say, “That’s great. I don’t. I’m not qualified.” They say, “What do you mean you’re not qualified? You’ve got a Doctorate degree in Theology.” “Well what’s that have to do with anything?” I say, “The reason I’m not qualified is because I don’t desire the office.” That disqualifies me. Now I can’t be an elder in the denomination where my family worships, so it’s a matter of conviction. I do not have a...every year they come and ask me to be an elder, and I say, “Thanks, but no thanks. I’m not qualified.” “What do you mean you’re not qualified?” “I don’t desire that office in this denomination. As a clear conscience I can’t do that.” So I don’t do that. I’m not qualified.

You have to desire the office. Is it something that God puts in you? Not something that people say

you've got to do it because you run your company well. Is it something that God deeply imbeds in the depths of your soul, that you realize this is something you really desire to do, that you really desire to labor in Word and doctrine for the sake of the glory of Christ and to stand for something that is good in the church?

Some of the additional qualifications are temperate. That means they're calm and collected spirit. Now some of these are repetitious, but just different descriptions, but they're really emphasizing repetitiously the need for a calm, controllable spirit on the person of a church leader. There's a sense of gentleness they have. They're equitable, not insisting on their own rights. They manage their own household. They're good servant leaders at home. One of the things we ought to do is to take a look at the home management of those we put in church leadership. Has God qualified them to serve in the church because they are a model in their own home?

Several years ago, when I was candidating for a church pastorate in Chicago, they said, "We'd like to fly you up here from Kansas City and talk to you about becoming our pastor/teacher." I said, "Well, let me throw another suggestion out. Why don't you come down here and live with me for a week. Why don't you just see how I run my life? It's far more important you observe me than I observe you, so why don't you come and live with me for a week." So two guys did. They came and spent a week with me. Based upon that, they said, "We don't want you." {LAUGHTER} No, they said, "Based upon that, would you come and talk to us about it?" You see, the point of it is this. It's far more important that the people of the church examine how the potential pastor/teacher/leader/elder manages his life because that's what you're saying, "We're going to put you in a position to stand for something that's good. We need to see that in the quality of your own life." But yet, what do we do? What do we do? We just fill their name out on a piece of paper and vote for them. It's much more serious than that. Manage your own household.

Not a new convert. In other words, they're not a new Christian. They have a maturity in their faith. That's because they're well-grounded in the Scripture. They have a good reputation. They're a good representative of Christ among non-believers. You see, not only do we have to have elders that can be working with the sheep, but also those who can work with the goats, the wheat and the tares. In other words, what is their reputation among non-believers? Are they viewed as contentious? Pig headed? Obstinate? Manipulative? What is that? We've got to take a look at that because part of the mission of the church is to what? Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all people. We need to have leadership who can be well received by the non-believers just as well as they can be nurturing the believers. You gotta take a look at that. It's a both/and not an either/or.

Then there's a couple from, some additional ones...there's a willingness. They're not serving against their will. In other words, they have the desire. They're not being coerced into serving. This is something they want to do.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR]...about desire because if [UNCLEAR] have a desire [UNCLEAR] people being called by God [UNCLEAR]...so where does human desire come up against God's calling for someone [UNCLEAR]?*

Well sometimes the human desire might be the kernel that gets it started. In other words, that's something I would like to do. That can be a normal, normal feeling and motivation. What happens then, you take somebody like that and you begin to nurture them in these qualifications and helping them understand their role, and they begin to see if they are truly called.

Here's what I did. That church that I took in Chicago, there were two elders. I was the third one. I taught for a whole year. Then we decided that, as the church was expanding in its numbers, we needed more leadership. So I did a series of about six weeks on biblical qualifications of leadership from pulpit. The

people need to hear this. The people need to hear it. After I did that six week series, I said, “If any of you men...if any of you men...if any of you men...have a desire to explore the possibility of church leadership, would you see me.” We had six men come forward. They just basically said, “This is my human desire. I think I’d like to explore this.” I said, “Terrific. Will you meet with me for the next three years every Monday morning at 6:00?” They said, “Yes,” so I started meeting with them and we developed a three-year elder leadership training program.

At the end of that time, of those six men, three believed, and we affirmed, that God was really qualifying them for church leadership as an elder. So three became elders. One man became a deacon. He said, “This has been the best thing for me I’ve ever gone through. I’m not an elder. That’s not my heart. I want take care of Aunt Minnie’s roof. I want to help Joan cut her grass. That’s what I want to do, and this has really helped me realize that I’m qualified; God has given me the desire to be a deacon, to take care of temporal needs,” so we put him in charge of training the next level of deacons.

So one of those men became a deacon. The sixth man was moved because for is employment and went to another church and within two years, he was serving as an elder there. What we did is we just basically took, “How many of you men would like to explore the possibility of this, and will you engage with me over the next couple of years to see if God is qualifying you for church leadership?” That’s how we started. So it started with their human desire to at least investigate the possibility.

Then what we did is we taught the church to say...it’s interesting, we went to the church and said, “If you see any of these men who God has qualified, let us know.” So after that first round of training, the next group we did, the church began to say, “You know, Tom really fits those qualifications.” So I went to Tom and I said, “Tom, some people have identified you as a potential church leader because they see your life, they see your maturity, they see, they understand the qualifications. Is that something you have interest in?” He said, “I’m really flattered, but I can’t do that because of my wife’s illness. I don’t desire the office.” “Terrific. You’re not qualified.” He wasn’t qualified. He didn’t disqualify himself. He just knew that he had some other priorities that he had to take care of that he could not do that at the time.

There’s a combination where the church must be taught about what are the qualifications of church leadership, so they begin to identify them. In the simplistic form, what is the responsibility of the membership of a church? It’s really very simple. Obey your elders. Essentially that’s it. That’s for the church membership. It’s obey your elders. Obey your leadership.

I had people come to me and say, “Should I join this church or that church?” I said, “Can you obey their elders?” “Well who are they?” You see, we don’t understand that. Basically, church membership is, “I’m going to submit myself to a group of men who are going to hold me spiritually accountable for my maturity growth in Christ for the glory of God, and I’m willing to submit to them and to obey them.” That’s church membership. We’ll get into that in more detail, but simplistically, that’s what it is.

Audience Member: Bruce, earlier you had taught us that the job of a member is to obey the elder but to also hold the elders [UNCLEAR] responsible for teaching the standard.

Absolutely. Yeah, that’s part of it. Yeah, that’s it. That’s the other side of the coin, is to be obedient to their elders, the leadership, but also hold them accountable. You’re holding them accountable to their leadership responsibility, which is to proclaim the Gospel of truth and hold them to biblical standards. There’s a duality there. We’ll get into that in more detail. But essentially, that’s what membership is.

Audience Member: *What’s the relationship between the pastor and the deacons?*

Well, we’ll get into that in a minute when I talk about deacons.

***Audience Member:** When you said obey, I think a lot of people who join churches and they don't even know who the elders are or...*

That's true. They don't know who the elders are, and if you do have deacons, they don't know who the deacons are and what their job description is. I'll get into that in just a moment.

The next page, you'll see from 1 Peter, there are some others. In other words, a church leader in the church is qualified because God wants them to be there. They've been qualified. You'll notice, by God's appointment. Sometimes you have to help men discover that. The first time we did it, it took us three years to have those men discover they were or they were not called for a leadership position in the church. After that first session, the next time we did it, we could do it on year because the congregation had heard me teach and preach enough, we'd gone through it, so it didn't take us three years, it took us on year the next time.

I'll walk you through what our training program was if you want to see that. Essentially we were trying to help these men discover is this something that God really wants in your life. Do you feel this calling? Is this something you can respond to? Notice they're not greedy. They're not money motivated.

Now so many times I have heard people say, "Well we need this person to be in a leadership position because they can raise money a lot. They're good motivators." Well there's nothing wrong with being a good motivator. But you don't motivate people toward money. In my judgment, this is my experience, lack of funds, lack of money in the church, is a quality control measure. Lack of funds in the church is a quality control measure. Same thing in a ministry. Lack of funds in a ministry is a quality control issue. Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills? All he has to do is sell a few heifers and you've got your money. The question is this. Not how do we go raise more money. The question is God's work done God's way will not lack God's support. The question is what do we need to do different ministerially so that the consequences will be income? You don't go say, "How do we go raise money?" You take a look and say, "What do we need to do differently so that God will provide his support because we're doing things his way?" God's work done God's way will not lack God's support.

I could give you illustrations of that. There was a period in the life of our church in Chicago where we had about 400 members at the time. At one time, because there was a closing of an automobile plant nearby in our neighborhood, we had almost 20% of our flock was unemployed. Our giving one up, because we made some changes.

We began to realize we have a responsibility to take care of our family. We began to make some shifts through our elders and through our deacons in how we took care of people. We had 20% of our congregation was unemployed and are giving went up. Those 20% never missed a payment on any bill they had—mortgages, car payments, medical issues or anything—because we, the church, took care of that. We believed it was our responsibility, not the government's. So we needed to make some changes, so we did.

We oriented ourselves more toward taking care of the needs of our people and put some other things on hold, such as a new building program. We just forgot that. We said, "What's the priority?" The priority is the people, not a building. So we cancelled the building program. We never did get to it because we reoriented and shifted toward people. That's our responsibility. We don't need a building to be a church. We need people to be a church.

We started taking...we made a shift in our mystery. All of a sudden, the giving started going up. You see, when people are fed, when the believer is fed and matured in the faith, biblically, their response is

going to be to give. Response is going to be that. When you see the donations and the contributions of a church are going down, the first thing you have to ask yourself is, “Are we not feeding them correctly? Are we not teaching them correctly? Are we not giving them biblical input? Are they not being fed spiritually?” When people are fed spiritually, their response is going to be, they’re going to want to give and participate because they want support the organization that’s feeding them, that’s taking care of them, giving them spiritual growth and spiritual life.

When you don’t see that, the first thing you have to ask yourself, the question is, “Are we feeding flock enough? What do with need to do differently?” You don’t talk about, “Let’s go on a major funding campaign.” God’s work done God’s way does not lack God’s support.

I could give you another illustration. The same thing applies...when I as the Vice President of Ministry for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes when I was in Chicago with FCA. We got to a point that our donations, we got down, we had about \$4.50 left. I called an emergency board meeting of our board in Chicago and said, “Guys, we’re closing the ministry tomorrow. We’re closing the doors.” They said, “You can’t do that!” I said, “We don’t have any funds.” They said, “Well go raise more money.” I said, “No, that’s not the issue. The issue is we need to shift our ministry, to get it off of kids and go to coaches. The real ministry of FCA, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, is not kids. It’s coaches. We need to spend more time discipling/maturing coaches in the high school who will lead their own kids and help them coach differently and be the role model, because I can’t be in the 325 high schools in the Chicago land area. But if I can work with 50 coaches, they’re going to impact 5,000 kids. I can only impact 50 coaches. So I’m going to make a major shift, and I’m not going to spend any time going to these high schools. I’m going to identify coaches that I can’t begin to disciple, I can begin to mature. I’m going to help them learn how to take care of their own athletes.”

We began to do that. The next day, one of our board members came in and said, “If you’re willing to do that, here’s a grant to get you going.” He gave us \$10,000. He said, “Let’s see if it works.” I spent the next three years with 50 coaches. All of a sudden, income started coming in. Where did it come from? Well first of all, it came from those coaches. But it came from the parents of the kids who that coach was now serving. You see, it was just a shift...we were not doing it in my judgment...in God’s way. The principle I tried to operate on was this—God’s work done God’s way will not lack God’s support.

The real issue is...that doesn’t mean we don’t raise funds. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is this...there’s a correlation between people’s response to being fed spiritually and their giving habits. There’s a natural ingredient that’s built into a person when they’re fed spiritually, and when you see you’re giving goes down in the local church, the first thing you have to ask yourself is what? Are we feeding the people correctly spiritually? Are we giving them what they need? Not what they want. Are we giving them what they need? When you do that, people have this natural inclination because of the grace of God beginning to respond back to that and take care of those who feed them.

One of the things we have to realize is what type of church leaders do we have? Those who feel that we have to go after the money? Or do we have the courage to change the shift of the ministry to realize that something may respond accordingly? They’re not greedy. They’re not money motivated.

***Audience Member:** Would you say one of the reasons that the church only gets say 2-3% is because they’re not being fed well enough, they aren’t lead to give?*

Well, I can’t say that about any other church than the church that I pastored, and the answer would be yes. For the churches that I pastored, when I realized that I needed to make a shift and go deeper into my teaching them how to live the Christian life and give them the understanding of a biblical gospel, when I started doing that, we began to see to the increase in giving. That’s when the 20% of the people became

unemployed and our giving went up. Interesting the giving never returned back to it's original base because all of the people we took care of for those several years, when they got jobs, guess who became the biggest givers? They were. We started at X. With 20% unemployed we to Y. And three years later, we were at Z. We never went back to X. I can only speak from my experience. I can't say that. It's not my role to judge any other church other than just look at my own, and that was my experience, that when you're not feed the people spiritually, and they're got growing in their faith, you're going to have an issue with the funds.

Jeremiah Burrows said in 1647, my paraphrase, one of the Puritan pastors, "When money becomes an issue, numbers become important and the Gospel is watered down." When money becomes important, numbers become critical and the Gospel is watered down. In my own church here in Pittsburgh, I've had people say, "We're getting the wrong kind of people in our church." "Why is that?" "Because they can't support it." Money. Numbers. Biblical standard is watered down. Because when you preach the biblical standards, you may not get numbers. You may not get numbers. If money becomes important, the numbers are critical. There's a correlation of how all that fits together. You see, guys, church leadership, you've got to have guts. You've got to be strong in the sense of commitment. You just don't pick somebody because they're a good manager in the world's system. You've got to realize that they're standing for something that is good and you're going to make those decisions that put you in the best position to be ordained with and aligned with that which God has ordained.

They're not lording it over others is another qualification. In other words, they're not domineering. They don't...they lead not drive. They serve not manipulate. You're not looking for somebody who will lord it over and say, "Oh, I'm an elder. Obey me." No, you're not looking at that. They're an example. They're a pleasure to follow. You see, one of the qualifications of membership of a church is can you follow the leaders? You see, there's no leadership unless there's followership. If nobody follows, there's no leadership. When there is right leadership, there will be followership. Those two things support each other.

You're asking the members who join the church to say, "Can you follow these men?" They're the kind of men that we want to put before you so that you will want to do that because they're an example of that. They're a pleasure the follow. They're accountable to Christ, the Chief Shepherd. They're motivated by the crown to be gained.

In other words, those are the qualifications, just take a look at those qualifications of an elder versus on the first page the qualifications of a strong, natural leader. You'll notice none of those have anything to do with what the person does; it's who the person is. You see, the world looks for what a person does; God looks at what the person is. That's where you see the qualifications.

***Audience Member:** Bruce, if you have a church organization that doesn't have elders and deacons, does the parish council take on that role or how does that function?*

I don't know. I think you'd have to ask them that. I don't know. I would assume that.

***Audience Member:** I mean this training helped to illuminate to me that if you don't have deacons and elders, what's the hierarchy then within the church?*

I don't know. The only thing I know that the Scripture teaches about elders and deacons. That's all I can say. I don't know other church environments, why they have what they have. I think you'd have to ask them. I can't speak to that. All I can say is when somebody asks me about it, I say there are only two offices that are really described in the Scripture, and that's elders and deacons.

Audience Member: [UNCLEAR] non-biblical leadership.

Yeah. It's sort of a man made constructed way because it looks like it's the way it ought to be. It works in business, so it works...something like that. I don't know of any other structure in the church than these two positions.

Audience Member: *Is it a manmade thing that there's a length of terms of service, like two years, three years, or is...?*

Yeah, that's manmade. When does a person step down? When they're no longer qualified. That's when they step down.

What we did is we had, every year, we renewed it. We basically got together the elders, the three other men and myself. The four of us got together and we re-evaluated each other. We had an evaluation of each other. Three evaluated one. It was done with loving grace. Just a wonderful experience, I mean, they were so helpful to me, to help me understand where some of the rough edges needed to be refined. We were accountable to each other. There was this mutual accountability we had with each other.

At the end of every year, we got together. We would go off for a day and just pray about we needed to be doing in the direction of the church. We would ask ourselves, "Has God still given us the desire to serve?" At one time, one of the men, whose wife became rather ill, he just said, "You know, I'm really having a tough time fulfilling my eldership responsibilities and maintaining my home because of the illness of my wife." We said, "We need to relieve you of one of those, so we'll just relieve you from your elder responsibilities." So we let him go for the next couple of years. He took care of his wife, and the Lord was pleased to bring her back to good health. He then came back on. He rejoined us again as one of our elders. But really, there was some flexibility there. So this isn't something that's rigid. I've never seen anything that has term limits on it.

Audience Member: *Bruce, is there a place for us...you talked about the importance of the pastor as rightly handling the Word of God and teaching it. Is there a place for the scrutinizing of the teaching?*

Yes.

Audience Member: *In a sense you get up and the pastor preaches Sunday after Sunday, he feels he's preaching the Gospel, but yet, he could probably do with some scrutiny. I'm just wondering what the role of that is? I don't think [UNCLEAR]...*

No. Unfortunately, most churches don't have a pastor evaluation. They don't do that, because I think most pastors are too insecure to have it happen. Really. Let's be honest. They're too insecure. They don't want to have it. I mean, who wants to hear that you're a lousy preacher? {LAUGHTER} Ted, what we did, we did that among the elders. Yes. We did that among each other. I asked those men, "You've got to hold me accountable to my instruction. Help me. Am I doing it well? Am I teaching to the point of understanding?" The three elders, the three or four other elders, that was conducted within the context of the plurality of elders.

It wasn't an open season for the pastor to just line himself up and have 400 people say, "I like this one. I didn't like that one." That's not it. But there was a checks and balances. There was refinement. There was an accountability among the elders. They were very, very helpful. That's where I learned to teach and to preach was through those three guys, because they would help me. They would say, "Bruce, you know, we need a little more application. Can you give us...how is this going to apply. Give us some uses of that." That was very helpful to me because I trusted them. I trusted them. Why did I trust them?

Because I know they were qualified. It wasn't because they were a threat to me. They were really an asset to me because I understood this. Those men had been qualified by God to fulfill this role. How can I say no to them? I need to listen to them. And they said the same thing to me.

One of the things they did to me, which I had never heard of, which they instituted, and that was this. They said, "We want you to have pastoral positional preference and deference. We're going to show deference. In other words, if we get to a point in theology that the four of us, or the five of us, can't agree, because you are the gift of the church according to the book of Ephesians, the role of the pastor/teacher of the church, there is such a thing..." they said, "We want to give you positional preference. You are the pastor/teacher. We're going to show preference and deference to you in certain situations. Now it's nothing you can ask for. You can't ask for it. We're going to give it to you." About one or two times in our years together that they said, "We're going to defer to you as the gift of the church. You're the pastor/teacher. You make that decision and we're going to support it." And so we did. But it was never...they said, "The deal is this. You can't ask for it. It's something that we're going to give you." That was part of our accountability. Boy, when you have that accountability among a group of church leaders and you're the pastor/teacher, but, you know that you're supported, you're encouraged, you're going to be refined, they're going to...everything they do is for your well-being because you're all trying to really stand for something that is good. So yeah, Ted, we built that into the elders. It was really a wonderful gift to me. A wonderful gift to me.

***Audience Member:** What the Scripture teaches about elders is incredible [UNCLEAR]. My question is, as a Christian man, we tend to think of okay, that's the elders over here, but as a Christian man, should we not each of us be looking to these as our own goals in Christian maturity...[UNCLEAR]...?*

Absolutely. Great question. The question is should not this be something we're all trying to attain? Say, "Lord would you build these qualities into me." Absolutely. That's where we, as men...men need to be the leaders of the church.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR]...*

Amen. Thank you. I'm glad we're all here together. Just let me give you one closing comment to show you where the world is. About 18 months ago, I was invited to go over to Pittsburgh Seminary to be part of a group of pastors and laypeople and Christian business people, to talk about what could the Christian community do to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the city of Pittsburgh. Is there something we could do collectively in the body of Christ?

The woman who is heading this up, was leading this discussion group and said, "Let's just go around and each of us commit, say what's the one thing that we're committed to in the church." Very wonderful comments—youth work, music, whatever it was, all kinds of things. I just happened to be the last one. I said, "I'm really committed to getting men back in the leadership of the church." As soon as I said that, she said, "That's the problem with the church. It's people like you who are destroying the church." Just as soon as I said that, she pointed a finger at me and she said, "It's people like you, it's guys like you who are destroying the church." All I said was, "My commitment is to getting men back in the role of leadership of the church, because of feminization of Christianity."

Needless to say, I wasn't invited back. {LAUGHTER} But I don't think I would have gone anyway. You see, that's the way the world thinks. The world thinks. And guys, you need to realize that God works through a hierarchy. The hierarchy in the church is he works through men, and then he works through women, he works through families. But he works through men. Now that is the most unpopular thing that people are going to hear me say because I'm like that, I'm the reason that the church is failing because we're not tolerant. Well, I would have to say the Scripture is rather clear who the church leaders

are. It's rather clear in the Scripture. We just need to be committed to standing for that which is good. Let's just be committed to standing for that which is good.

We'll continue this next week. Let's pray. Father, we are overwhelmed by the qualifications that you impose upon us to be qualified church leaders. None of us, Lord, none of us, are anything like that. We confess our shortcomings, we confess our sinfulness, we confess our greediness, our ego, our self-centeredness. Father, we confess all those things that, that's not who we are, but yet, Lord, that's who you want us to be. So Father, I thank you for these Brave Men on Friday. May we take a look at these standards and say, Lord, this is what we all want to grow into becoming. Not because we can do it at the human level, but because it's something that through your divine grace, you will equip us to be. Father, just help us realize that these are your standards. These aren't the standards of the world. May we commit ourselves to be committed to standing for that which is good and that which is revealed in the Scripture for Jesus sake. All the Brave Men said....Amen!