

## THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: September 2, 2011

Gracious Heavenly Father, we come before you today. Thank you that you are omnipresent and that we don't come into your presence; we just enjoy your presence. Father, we just pray that how great you are. We just pray this day that you would be pleased once again to open our eyes that we might behold your glory, your majesty, and our response would be an appropriate act of worship, and to that end, Father, we just pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Last week, I mentioned the future book coming out by Ravi Zacharias on the various "isms." I want to correct a couple of things I said. Here are the notes I took from my time with him. I just want to clarify this so you'll understand it. He said the issue that the other "isms," meaning Islam and communism and all the other "isms" of this world, cannot deal with are three great changes in history. The first one is formation. I called it creation, last week. It's the same thing—formation. He said that these organizations, these ministries, or these false religions, really cannot deal with the issue from non-existence to existence. How do they deal with that? They can't deal with it. Christianity is the only one that can start from Ex nihilo—out of nothing—and create something. He goes into a lot of detail about how these other "isms" really cannot deal with the whole idea of formation taking non-existence to existence. They can't explain their own existence. We, in Christianity, can explain that because of the Scripture. He goes on to talk about physical intelligence reveals divine intelligence. As a result of that, these "isms"—communism, Hinduism, Buddhism, all the other "isms"—really cannot deal with the whole issue of formation—taking something that does not exist and taking it into existence.

The second thing he said, the third great, the second great change that they cannot deal with is what he calls transformation, and that is going from depravity to righteousness. From depravity to righteousness. There's no other way to deal with depravity than through the person and work of Christ. All the other "isms"—Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism, all the other "isms"—cannot deal with taking that which is depraved, the total depravity of a person, and having that be transformed into righteous living.

It was interesting, I was reading the other day about a U.N. resolution that came out. Every year they publish with the BBC an issue dealing with the world and its situations—what are the number one problems of the world. Now for years, they have been saying that the number one problem has been hunger and poverty. Now for the last 21 years, they have said the number one issue in human existence on planet earth is the problem of hunger and poverty. Now they've come out with a new one that says the number one problem with humanity on planet earth is corruption. It is no longer poverty and hunger, it is corruption.

Now just take a look at what's going on around the world. Even look at college sports. What do you see in that? You see corruption. What do you see in business? Corruption. What do you see in government? You see corruption. What do you see in Libya? You see corruption. You see all of those things. They're saying the number one problem in the world today, in humanity, is no longer hunger or poverty, it is human corruption, which really talks about the depravity of man.

Christianity is the only faith that can deal with the issue of transformation. How do you deal with total depravity? How do you deal with total corruption? You see, all the other "isms" really can't deal with that. By God's grace, we can deal with total depravity because of the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ and justification by faith alone.

The third one he talks about is translation, and that is to be with God forever. How do you get to heaven? You don't earn it. It's a gift. It's something you receive; it's not something you achieve.

Ravi's book, in January—I don't remember the title—is going to deal with those three major issues. It's going to be formation, transformation and translation, and how he's going to say that Christianity is the only faith that can answer those three issues, and all the other "isms" can't deal with those. His book is going to basically help us understand the significance of that.

I wanted to correct what I had said last week about that to make sure that I was quoting him accurately. I look forward to that publication coming out. As soon as I get my copy, he's going to send me one. As soon as I get I'll bring it and let us see what it's about. I think it could be very helpful for the body of Christ to understand the enemy that we're against.

Remember, brothers, as we've been saying, the Scripture describes the church in three ways, from its inception even back in the old covenant to the new covenant. Those three words are remnant (its not everyone). The second word is persecution—those who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. The third word that describes the church—the ecclesia, the gathering, the assembly—would be the word warfare. Remnant, persecution and warfare are the three words that, biblically, are consistently describe God's people, be it nation of Israel or the elect in the new covenant. We will deal with the remnant, we will deal with persecution and we will deal with our being involved in spiritual warfare.

That really means this, that somebody can be a member of a church, but not be a member of the church. They can be a member of a church, but they may not be a member of the church. That's what we've been studying in our topic here, The Function and Formation of the Church. As we saw in Ephesians 1, that the methodology of how God created his church was through the wonderful, gracious, merciful doctrine of election. Then we saw in chapter 2 the benefits of what we are saved from. Now we're talking a little bit about the local church and some of its powerful aspects that make it what it is today, being salt and light.

We talked last week about the thing that holds the church together is the principle of submission. Now church membership is really quite simple when you look at it from 100,000 feet. It's essentially two things. Submit to your leadership—submit to the elders—and hold them accountable. We fail fairly miserably on the second part of that, which is holding our leadership accountable.

The two ways in which we do that in the body of Christ—in the ecclesia, in the gathering, the true body—its by how do we identify those whom God has qualified? One of the real problems in corporate America is we don't know how to hire. We don't hire well. Well in the church, it's the same thing. We don't do a good job of identifying whom God has qualified, biblically, to be a church leader.

We often times think that just because somebody has been successful in the corporate world, therefore they will be successful in the spiritual world. That may not be true. Now I'm not saying it's not a possibility, but I'm saying that's not the rule. We need to take a look at the 28 attributes of an elder and say, "This is whom God has qualified for that position. We recognize them." We do not appoint them, we recognize something that God has already done.

You see, we don't hire well in the church because we have basically copped out and said, "Well, you've got to have 32 elders. We only have 26. Let's find 6 more people to hit our quota." So what do we do? We go find somebody, "Would you like to be an elder? Would you like to be a deacon? Would you like to be a leader?" "Well I don't think I have time." "But you'd be a good one." "Okay, I'll do it."

Often times, you see, what I'm saying is, inside the local church, we don't hire well. We really don't know how to identify those whom God has qualified as church leaders. And so, really, membership has responsibility to hold its leadership accountable; accountable to the biblical standard.

When we get into trouble inside the church is when we begin to structure an organization based upon the system of this world rather than the revelation of Scripture. It's really a difficult thing, and we have membership in the church, really is very simple. It is to be obedient to the elders. Now if you can't be obedient to those elders, guess what? Don't join that church. You've got to know what the elders represent. You've got to understand what are the doctrines of this church, because your responsibility and mine as a member is I will be obedient to them because that is my role as a member. It is to be submissive. If you can't be submissive to the doctrines of the leadership of that church, then guess what? Don't join it, because you'll violate your responsibility biblically.

The second part of it is, is you've got to identify those whom God has qualified. We need to hold our church leaders accountable. We just don't do that well. One of the ways in which we do that is we understand the necessity of recognizing and respect the gift of teaching. Not only is the church held together by the principle of submission, but also by recognizing and respecting the gift of teaching and ruling. That means the church leaders are not viewed as a boss, but as a father, as a shepherd, and one who leads. You could look at 2 Corinthians 11:2. This principle really helps us understand the necessity of our recognizing the teaching ministry of the church.

Let's take a look at some of the things the church talks and teaches us about church leadership. I'm not going to go into all of the details. We'll pick up that later. This is just sort of a big, quick overview.

Leaders are guardians of the flock. Take a look at Acts 20:28. Basically the role of church leadership is to labor in Word and doctrine, and to shepherd the flock. Acts 20:28, "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Now there is the overall responsibility of the leaders, the elders of a church. It is not necessarily to come up with the appropriate programs. That may happen. That may be an extension of overseeing the flock. But there's this idea of paying attention, careful attention, to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. The idea of being a shepherd. In other words, that's the role of that. Now that means you've got to have the right people who know how to do that and can do that. If we don't have the right people, if we don't hire correctly (using that phraseology), then we're not going to have the oversight within the flock of a church that we need to make it something that is going to bring glory to God.

There are two words that really describe for us the role of church leadership, and that would be the words elders and guardians or shepherd. Now essentially, elders are those who are of spiritual maturity. That's what you're looking...you're not looking for somebody who has good corporate leadership skills. Now they may have that. Please understand what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that somebody who does have good corporate leadership skills cannot have good maturity skills. That's a very strong possibility. But I'm saying the one that really guides us is do they have the maturity in Christ to be able to want to oversee the flock. So it has to be one of spiritual maturity.

This is not a role for a brand new believer. It's just not a role for a brand new believer. They may have wonderful corporate, executive leadership skills, but just because they have that and they're a new believer, does not qualify them, have them qualified by the Holy Spirit, to be a leader in the church.

I gave you the illustration years ago of the church that I pastored in in Kansas. When I was brought on board to be the pastor, there was a gentleman who was running for the governorship of the state. The first thing they said is, when we converted to elder rule, they said, "Well here, he'll be a great elder," and I said, "On what basis?" "He's running for governor." "Governor of what?" "Governor of the state of Kansas." Now he was a great guy. He was a wonderful guy, but just because he had a political visible leadership position, does that qualify him for church leadership? No, it doesn't. But you see, in the mind

of the church—the ecclesia, the people—we don't understand the principle of the value of church leadership and its value.

A local church, brothers, can only go as far as its leadership takes it. That's as far as it can go, because God always works through a chain of command. You see God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. You don't see the Son trying to be the Father. You don't see the Holy Spirit trying to be the Son. What you see is this. What God ordains, the Son accomplishes, the Holy Spirit applies. Now that is a wonderful chain of command, and you never see them crossover and trying to be each other. God always works through a chain of command. He works through his Son, he works through his Holy Spirit, and he works through his appointed, qualified, recognized church leaders in the church, and that's the chain of command. It's a wonderful protection. But we don't do well in identifying who are qualified, mature church leaders who can, essentially, labor in Word and doctrine and oversee the flock.

*Carl: Bruce, can you expound on maturity a little bit because I think a lot of people, they take spiritual maturity lightly.*

I think the best way to do that, I'm going to get into that probably in a couple of weeks when I get into the 28 qualifications of an elder. I mean, that's, if you want to read, read Titus and Timothy. You will find the qualifications of an elder. There are 28 of them. There's nothing magical about those, magical about the number 28. They're just qualifications. What we need to do is say, "Take this person up against that because it is the Holy Spirit who qualifies them." We recognize them.

Now what do we normally do in the church? We have leadership Sunday, and you get a card, and it says, "Is there somebody you'd like to recognize or appoint to be an elder or a deacon," and you write their name on it and then somebody on the nomination committee calls them up and says, "Bruce, your name was turned in to be an elder. Would you like to be one?" Rather, we ought to say, "You are one," or "Are you one?" You see, that's because the Holy Spirit qualifies. We recognize.

The elders need to realize this—they are recognized, but they're not appointed. People don't appoint them. People recognize them. That means this—the church, the ecclesia, the body of Christ—needs to understand what church maturity is; maturity in a believer. So where does that come from? That comes from the pulpit. You've got to teach that from the pulpit. You never bring about change in the church until you've taught the doctrine in the pulpit first, because you give people a reason. Information beforehand is the reason; information afterwards, an excuse; and nobody likes excuses.

What you do is you teach, "Here are the qualifications for an elder." That may take you five or six weeks. Then after that, you say to the church, "Church, you now understand how God is qualifying certain people in our church, certain men in our church, to be qualified leaders to be shepherds to oversee the flock. Spiritual maturity. You understand what that is now—the doctrine. You understand the description of maturity in the life of a believer. Do you recognize anybody like that? If there are, let us know who they are." We don't go appoint them; we recognize whom God has already qualified. God does the qualifying.

The second word there is, dealing with spiritual maturity, is the word shepherd or guardian. It's the responsibility to shepherd or to guide that flock. Now God appoints them, calling them by the Holy Spirit, because he qualifies them. Their authority—the elders of a church—must be recognized by the people, but realize it is not given by the people. See the difference? A leader has to get understand this—the church has recognized this in me, but I don't derive my authority from them.

We recognize the people, but the people realize it is not given by the people. Leaders are qualified by the Holy Spirit. We recognize them when he has given them the gifts of ministry, spiritual maturity,

leadership qualities, which he imparts to them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now that's just a general oversight of what it is. We just don't do well.

What I'm trying to say, brothers, is this—you and I as church members have a responsibility to hold those leaders accountable. One of the ways we do that is which ones do we place in that position because we recognize that they have been appointed, they have been qualified by the Holy Spirit, not by us. You see the difference? We recognize them. We set them apart.

One of the 28 qualifications is this—the desire of the office. In my local church, I'm not qualified as an elder because I don't desire the office. Automatically that eliminates me. Every year, they come to me and say, "Bruce, would you like to be an elder?" I say, "No, thank you, because I'm not qualified." "What do you mean you're not qualified? You have a doctorate degree." "Well I have an electrical engineering degree and that means I can turn off lights. Does that make me qualified?" {LAUGHTER}

But you see, the mindset is this, "Oh," but you see, one of them is this—I've got to examine myself and say, "I don't desire that office, therefore, I am not qualified." My answer always is, "I am not qualified because I don't meet that qualification. I don't want that office in this denomination. I cannot do that with a clear conscience, so therefore, I can't do that," so I'm not qualified. You see, the standard is what does the Scripture say qualifies a person for leadership? Not your degrees. Not your experience. Not your giftedness. It's has the Holy Spirit qualified you? Brothers, we need to take seriously those whom we place into local authority in the church because your responsibility and mine is going to be this—you've got to submit to them. You gotta submit to them. If you can't do that, don't put them in that position.

As I was telling you a couple of weeks ago, when I was on one of the Indian reservations with one of my family foundations that supports Native American causes, I was on the Lakota Sioux Reservation in Red Cloud Reservation out in South Dakota. I was talking to one of the tribal chiefs of the Sioux tribe—Lakota Sioux. He was telling me about Red Cloud, who was one of their great cultural leaders in the Native American tribe of Lakota Sioux. He was very, very strong on, it is the responsibility of the local tribe to hold its leadership accountable. He said the way you do that is you don't follow them. If there's somebody who's doing a poor job of leadership, don't follow them. The way that you hold them accountable is not to follow them. What you'll do is you'll follow somebody who you can.

Now, we need to understand that. That's a nice principle. It's a little bit difficult in our culture. But what he's saying is this—the way you hold a leader accountable is not to follow them. If there's somebody else who is better to be followed, you follow them. His point was this—there can be no leadership unless there's followership. There are no leaders unless there are followers. How is it that you hold somebody accountable? You don't follow them. You go follow somebody that you can. Now I realize that's a nice theory. That's tough in our culture. I understand that.

*Dan: I can't remember which business book it was, but there was a quote about leadership and somebody said, "How do you know if you're a leader?" and they said, "Turn around and look behind you and see if there's anybody following you."*

Yes. Exactly. In other words, there's no leadership unless somebody is following. Remember the study we did at the Naval Academy that I gave you a couple of months ago? The third element was people followed. The real issue is why did they follow? You see, we looked at Hitler, Gandhi, Christ, Kennedy and King. The question was why did people follow. The question you and I have to ask ourselves, as a growing mature believer in Christ, is why would somebody choose to follow you. You see, that's the real issue for us, as a church leader. Why is it that somebody in my local church would want follow me? You see, that's the question we've got to ask as we look at church leadership. Why do we want to follow

them? Is it because we recognize that God the Holy Spirit has qualified that person to be one to whom I can willfully submit because he has been an appointed leader, qualified by the Holy Spirit?

Leadership is really qualified by the Holy Spirit, and the congregation needs to understand what that means. Carl, your point is well we have not done a good job in teaching our flocks what it means to identify the right kind of people.

*Coop: To your point, often times, we see people on boards, as a board member, because of revenue versus results. In other words, they pick them because either they either have money or they are seen as being able to access money [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah. In a couple of weeks, when we get into looking what is the definition of a healthy church, one of the things we're going to look at will be the qualifications for leaders. We'll get into this in more detail down the road a little bit.

What I want to talk today, just a little bit, is a big overview of leadership to give us a serious understanding of the responsibility we have as members of a local flock to hold our leaders accountable.

One of the things...let's go to John 21 please. I think we could probably call this the appointing of the first elder, in Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21. I want you to see this...again, brothers, this is from the big...this is from 100,000 feet, looking at the big picture of it, not the small details. We'll get into that later. But in John 21, let's begin at verse 15—conversation between Jesus and Peter—“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’” Now there you see the word “feed” literally means teaching. That's what feeding means. You teach.

Go to 1 Peter 2:2 and you'll see this...Peter understood that because this is what he wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” He's talking about teaching.

When Jesus said, “Feed my lambs,” he's basically saying teach them. That's how you're going to grow lambs. Now notice the word “lambs” That word there—lambs—when it looks at it in the context of the local church, really would be a reference to young believers...primarily concern is teaching young believers. Now they're lambs. They're not mature sheep yet.

The imagery is, as a leader of the church, your first responsibility, one of those is, to make sure that you're teaching the pure, unadulterated Word of God to the new believers. You're feeding them, because the role is to bring them into maturity. You have to start with where they are, and you teach them. That's the great value of Dr. Rogers' book. That's a wonderful book to give to a new believer, and just walk them through that, “Let's go page by page. Let's look at the truth of this. Let's look at how people are going to refute that truth, and let's see how you can use that in your life.” This is a great book that's going to help us understand the doctrines of your tradition as the Anglican church of the great truths of The Reformation, the great doctrines of grace, and helping people understand this is how I can have this learning lead to my living. That's what an elder does. That's what the church does. That's what church leadership does. They feed the lambs. That's the first thing.

Then we go to verse John 21:16., “He said to him a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’” The first one was feed my lambs. This is tend my sheep. The idea “tend” here is the idea of shepherding. It's a guardian. It's the idea of training, it's discipline, it's counseling, it's comforting, it's encouraging, it's protecting, and it's restoring people back into the flock. That's all what it means when it says tend or

shepherd or guard. Notice it's a different group of people—my sheep. We started with lambs—new believers—now we go to sheep. That's the entire church.

What is it that a church leadership does to the entire church? They train them, they discipline them, they disciple them, they counsel them, they bring them comfort when it's needed, they bring them encouragement when it's needed, they protect them when it's needed, and they restore them when it's needed. You see, that's all wrapped up in this word tend or shepherd. You do that for the whole flock of the local church.

Let's go to verse John 21:17-18, "He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.'" Now in verse 17, we see this—the word feed again. It's the idea of teaching and training. Look at Matthew 4:4 and you'll see a cross reference to that. Now my sheep—that's the same as verse 16. That's the total flock of the local body. It's all the flock. It's the young and the old. It's the mature. Unlike verse 16, which is the new believer.

What you see here, this is, what I'm just calling, the appointment of the first elder. Here's what an elder does. Here's what church leadership does. Now that's what it is at 60,000 feet. It's a big picture. You feed my lambs. You have a concern for the new believer. Then you tend my sheep—you're involved in training, disciplining, helping people come to maturity. And then you feed my sheep—it's what you do for the whole church. What you begin to see is this is the role of church leadership.

Now the question is whom has God qualified to fulfill those wonderfully difficult responsibilities? Church leadership is not an easy thing when you understand it in this context. It's not sitting around talking about the color of exit signs. You're talking about the maturity development of the flock.

***Audience Member:** Yesterday a friend who volunteers as a ranger out in the Rocky Mountain National Park sent a beautiful picture of three little bighorn sheep on the top of the mountain. He said, "Unfortunately, the statistics say that only one of these three will grow to be an adult bighorn sheep." I guess there's something to be said about that, since that happens in nature.*

Well it does happen in the church, too, doesn't it. That's our responsibility is to make sure that we are involved in the training, maturing of the believers. Now the church needs to—the church meaning the membership—need to understand that, and they need to understand what they're holding their leadership accountable to do.

It is not the responsibility of the local membership of the church to hold them accountable to come up with great programs. That may be a consequence, but it really basically is how are you tending, how are you feeding, how are you shepherding the flock. What's going on with that?

Several years ago, I was involved in a church situation trying to help them understand some church leadership. The pastor came up to me and said, "Bruce, if we adopted your theory of church leadership, we wouldn't have any." I said, "You ought to thank me because I just defined for you your responsibilities for the next five years, and that is to develop church leaders."

Now in my role, when I was the pastor, I felt my primary responsibility was two-fold. It was not to take the young people camping. Somebody else could do that. My role was to teach the Scripture, proclaim the whole counsel of God, and build church leaders. Now that took all of my effort. That's all I really

had time to do. If you're looking for me to be a youth pastor, I'm not it. But you see, you have to really determine your priorities. When that pastor said to me, "If we adopted the biblical definition of church leaders, we wouldn't have any," I said, "Isn't that a wonderful realization? You now know what your responsibilities are for the next five or six years. Your role is to really build them, to train them."

So we began, in my church, the church in Chicago, we began an elder training program. It involved three things. It involved the teaching of doctrine. We studied the Westminster Confession, we studied the 1<sup>st</sup> London Confession, and we studied the Heidelberg Confession. Those are three things that we studied for a year. That was our first year. We studied theology, because the role of that elder, should God qualify him, would be to labor in Word and doctrine. They needed to be able to refute objections when people came and said, "Why are you teaching the doctrine of election? Don't we have free choice? Isn't it free will?" I wanted the elders to be able to refute that and not necessarily have to send them to me. The church needed to know there are other people who can answer that question, to understand our doctrines of grace.

The second year was about sermon preparation. How do you study the Scripture inductively? How do you prepare a sermon? We had them practice preaching in the sermon, because whenever I was not there in the pulpit, guess who taught? One of the other elders. That was their role. We didn't need to go out and bring somebody in. The church needed to say that when Bruce isn't there, there's another person who can step right up and do it. That's what we've got qualified church leaders for. So we never brought in an outsider unless we had special programmatic ministry, which we did. But generally speaking, when I wasn't there—on vacation or away for a week—it was one of the elders who stepped up and taught. I wanted the people to see that the church was not about me. It was about us a church leaders. It was about us—a unified body of believers that they knew that we were protecting them, and so they begin to sense that, that it was more than just one person. God was pleased to qualify several others.

The third part of our elder training program was counseling. How do you counsel the bereaved? How do you counsel the discouraged? How do you counsel the downtrodden? Because that's part of the shepherding.

The three things really involved in the training of our church leaders was teaching, preaching and counseling. We looked at that and said that's really what makes up the heart of a mature shepherd. It took us some time to do that. We had, as I taught the congregation, I did a nine-week series on church leadership before I ever said, "Do you recognize anyone?" or "If some of you men have a desire for that office, would you come and see me." One of the qualifications is you desire the office.

I had six men come forward and say, "I desire the office." I said, "Alright here's the deal. You'll meet with me every Monday morning at 6:00 for two hours for the next year. You willing to do that? Because that's our elder training program." And so they begin to do that. At the end of that year—we started with six—three became elders because the Lord was pleased to qualify them and the church recognized it.

Now the church knew that these six guys were going through this training program. They understood that. They were to observe their lives as they were going through all this. Three of them ended up, the Lord was pleased to qualify them, and the church recognized them, set them apart as elders. One of them said, "This is not me, but it's been a great experience. I'm really a deacon. I really want to take care of people's needs," and so he became the first deacon we had. Then we began a deacon training program, because he said, "You know, my heart really is, I want to make sure that Mabel's grass is cut. You know, that's really where my heart is," and I said, "Terrific! The Lord is setting you apart to be a deacon," so he began to be a deacon.

One of the other men left the church. He was moved. *(The sound at this point is diminished as the*

*battery in Bruce's microphone went dead.*) He was transferred in his job. He went to another church and he became an elder in another church after a period of time because he'd been qualified. And guess what? The pastor called me and said, "Boy, this guy you sent to me really has his act together." I said, "Well, he's just gone through a leadership training program that we have." He says, "I think our people want to have him, after we get to know him, have him become one of our elders." I said, "I think he might have been qualified by the Holy Spirit." You can discern that.

The other one said, "You know, this is just more than I want. I just can't do that." He became one of our greatest church members, but he was not an elder because he recognized, "this is not me. I recognize that and this is [UNCLEAR] great for me, but it really has convinced me that this is not what I can do well." He became involved in doing some evangelism in our neighborhoods, began to head up our small groups and things like that. But he was not an elder. He recognized that because we went through the standard.

You see, all I was trying to do, brothers, was hire correctly. That's all I was trying to do. It took some time. People say, "Well you're not spending enough time with our youth. You're not taking them camping. You're not teaching them to play racquetball." {LAUGHTER} I said, "You know, with all due respect, I'm not a glorified babysitter. That's your job. You want to talk about youth work?. It's parenting. Youth work is good parenting." So we set up a process where we had the fathers be the youth workers. One of our elders, who was really committed to that, begin to develop a program. Our youth program was run by the fathers of the church. We had no youth director. It was under the supervision of a mature elder—one of those guys who came through the process. We set up a wonderful youth program, but it had to do with fathers were the ones who were doing it. Who took them camping? The fathers did. It wasn't me.

So you see, it all fits together. The church needs to understand the role of church leaders in the church.

***Audience Member:** You just identified the answer that I hear so many places where, "How do I know what my calling is in the church?" Well you step up and you go through the various training because it's all identified and God will identify.*

Absolutely.

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

I was as successful with the three who did become elders, who were qualified, as the ones who said I'm not. I was equally as positive and successful in training both of those guys because the one who said, "this is not me," I was as successful with that as the one who said this is me. You see, because it was the Holy Spirit that qualified them and revealed to them where they were, what they needed to be and how they could serve.

One gentleman who went through the course, who did not become an elder, was one of our most valuable lay people because he had a great grounding, he was very mature, but he realized this is not me.

***Audience Member:** [UNCLEAR] said the survey in this study a few years back, spiritual motivations, [UNCLEAR] in terms of purpose [UNCLEAR].*

Yes. That's really a study to be done. [UNCLEAR] spiritual motivation—what is it that motivates you spiritually and [UNCLEAR]...remember this, brothers, ministry is really giving away to somebody else what God has given you. That's what it is. The issue is this—do I understand what God has given me and how can then, with integrity, give it away to somebody else. That's ministry.

Ministry is really who you are and where you are. Ministry is not something that you do. Ministry is who you are, where you are. There's always that possibility for you to give away to somebody else as a [UNCLEAR] of your life what God has given you. When you begin to collectivize that and put it together in the local ecclesia—the local assembly, the local gathering of the church—there's a structure in which God has ordained that that would be worked out for his glory and our good, as well as our protection.

So we come to him as our Father because we know that he will provide everything that the church needs. We come to him as our King because we know that he is the only one who can pardon our sin and take us from depravity to righteousness. And we come to him as our Master because we know that he's the only one can protect us from the fiery darts of the evil one.

You see, guys, the congregation needs to understand this, as much as anything, and the only way they're going to do that is you've got to teach it from the pulpit beforehand so they begin to say, "Oh! That's the structure of the ecclesia. That's the ordained organizational chart of the church."

Several times I'm asked to come in and do some consulting with some of the church leaders, and I'm just amazed at the number of configured strategies they have for church leadership. They'll have a group here who does this, and a group here who does that, and a group here who does this, and a group here who does that, but there's no combination of unity in the whole thing because you've got four different groups trying to make four different decisions and they combat each other.

You see, brothers, we don't need to create a new paradigm for the church. We don't need to create a new methodology for the church. We just need to be obedient to the one that's given to us. That's what we need to do. If I hear we need to create a new paradigm one more time, I'm going to barf. {LAUGHTER} That's all it is. "The church is not functioning, therefore with we need to create a new church." "No, you just lack finances." In my mind, as I look at the biblical principles of finance, lack of funding is God's quality control measure. {LAUGHTER} You don't ask yourself how do I raise more money; you ask yourself what do I need to do differently, because my father is going to provide for me in the church. Maybe we need to redirect our ministry because we don't have the funds coming in.

I think I told you about the church in Chicago. We were a membership of 400 at the time. There was a group who worked in an auto plant about 25 miles away. We had about ¼ of our congregation was employed by this auto company. Well they went bankrupt. We had roughly 25% of our church unemployed. Do you know what happened? The giving went up because they had been taught, from the pulpit, "It is our responsibility to take care of our flock. We're not going to rely upon the government or the state of Illinois. That's our responsibility." Our giving went up.

We set up a process where those families never missed a payment on anything they ever had a payment. We also had to teach them how to manage themselves not to be luxurious and live off of us, so there was a combination. We met with these families and said, "Here's your responsibility. Here's ours. We're going to do this together." When those families found jobs, guess who became the biggest giver? Those people for whom we had taken care of. Our giving never returned back to the original point. Let's say it started at X, and then when people became unemployed, it went to Y. When they found jobs, it went to Z. It never went back to X.

You see, lack of funds is God's quality control measure. All he has to do is to sell a few heifers on the hill to provide what you need. We come to him as our Father saying, "Father, are we doing this correctly? Maybe the reason the funds are not here is because we're not doing what you're asking us to do. Maybe we're not obedient to that which is already revealed to us. Maybe we're following the system

of the world too much and thinking that if we do it like everybody else, we're going to be successful because they were in California." Unfortunately, pastors are like football coaches. They plagiarize. "Oh, it worked over there; it must work here. We'll get the same book. And let's do... we'll do that same thing they did over here." What if the Lord wants your church to do something different? That book is going to be a hindrance to us, not an asset. The question becomes, when you look at lack of funds within a ministry, you begin to say, "What is it we need to do differently, ministerially, to see if the Lord might provide?"

I'd like to give you an illustration of when I was with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. We made some very difficult decisions. but I would not let the ministry go into debt. What that made us do as the leadership is force us to change what we were doing ministerially and how we serve, and the quality of what we did took off because we recognized it was the lack of funds was getting our attention. You see, that's the role of what church leaders do. It's because they observe and ask those little questions.

Brothers, as we take a look at church leadership, the two things we need to recognize is this—the role of the membership of the church is to be submissive to church leaders, and to identify those and put them in the right position so that you can be willfully and willingly and graciously submissive to them. The second thing is this—we need to hold them accountable by who we place in those leadership positions, and that's because the Holy Spirit qualifies them; we recognize them. We don't appoint. We recognize them and say, "Oh! There's one." "I'm willing to submit." "There's another one." "I'm willing to submit." When that happens, brothers, the church begins to function to the glory of God and [UNCLEAR].

We'll continue this as we begin to look next week. Sig send out the next lesson please. We'll begin to take a look at what I'm calling the essential ingredients of a healthy church. I use the word healthy because I want to pick up the idea that it's growing, it's alive. Not a perfect church. Remember, if you want a perfect church, then don't join it. We'll talk about the ingredients of what I [UNCLEAR—BACKGROUND NOISE]. Let's pray.

Father, it's with a great sense of awe that we reflect upon your revealed truth. Lord, we don't have all the answers. We don't need to have all the answers. We just need you. So Father, as we pray about our response to what you teach us through your Holy Spirit, who's role is to guide us into all truth, I would ask, Father, that if we said things that are inconsistent and contrary to your revealed revelation in the Scripture and its sufficiency, that you would remove that from our mind, and only those things that are consistent with your nature, your attributes and your glory would be the things that we remember this day. To that end, Father, we just thank you in Jesus' Name. Amen!