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Church Leadership is a Picture of the Gospel

The mission of the gospel is to make disciples

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

The gospel is seen in the mission as we:

Are “going” (in the power of Jesus)

And “baptizing” (in the grace of Jesus)

And “teaching” (about the person of Jesus)

And Jesus gives us two resources for the mission:

His authority

His presence

“Disciple” is an identity. Everything else is a role. Some roles have titles, but roles are temporary, while our identity as disciples will last forever.

A disciple of Jesus is someone who learns the gospel, relates in the gospel, and communicates the gospel.

To be a disciple of Jesus we have to see Jesus as both Lord and Christ.

Acts 2:36 *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified*

Lord = authority (He is our King, He is our Deliverer)

Christ = Servant (He made our forgiveness possible, He gives us His righteousness)

Jesus is our Senior Pastor, the Head of the Church

Ephesians 1:22 *And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

So how then does Jesus exercise His leadership and authority over the Church?
First, He willingly served us with His own life, He died, He took our place as the necessary sacrifice for our sins, so that He could create in us a new creation, the Church

Second, He gives gifts to the church. When He left to go back to be with the Father, He did not leave us empty handed. He gave us the Holy Spirit, and...

Ephesians 4:11 *and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*

These are roles, functions. Jesus gives each of us gifts, so that we can use those gifts to serve and build up the church by making more mature disciples of Jesus. These roles can be carried out by men or by women

He also gives the church structure, and in that structure He gives leaders, illustrated here in **Philippians 1:1** *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.*

Three people in the church:

Elders

Deacons (they're the doers, who lead by getting others to do things with them). The word "deacon" literally means "server," and again, deacons can be male or female.

Saints (that's all of us.) "Saint" means "set apart one," someone God has transformed into a follower of Jesus.

Titus 1:5 *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*

"Put into place what remained (out of order) into order"

More maturity needed? Someone's unrepentant sin not dealt with?

Lack of functional structure?

"Appoint elders in every town"

If, as a church-planter, it was Titus' duty to appoint elders in each town, what kind of men was he looking for?

It's easy to think that he was looking for men who had certain skill sets, certain talents, certain gifts; but Paul instructed him to look for something different in the men God had called to be elders in each of those local churches:

Titus 1:6-9 *if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he*

may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

While there is certainly a skill mentioned (able to teach the Bible well), most of what Paul tells Titus to look for in potential elders are character qualities. Paul also gave similar instructions to Timothy, who was called to lead the already established church in Ephesus, which can be organized like this:

Relation to God:

1. **A man**
2. **Above reproach** (without any continuing, obvious character defect) which is the over-riding qualification
3. **Able to teach** (effective Bible communicator)
4. **Not a new convert**, but a mature Christian

Relation to Family:

5. **Husband of one wife** (sexually pure, devoted, his wife can count on his loyalty)
6. **Obedient children** (an effective father)
7. **Manages family well** (provides for, leads, loves) Doug Wilson says, “God told Christian parents to bring up their children in such a way that they have a really boring testimony. This is what it means to bring children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Relation to Self:

8. **Sober-minded** (mentally and emotionally stable)
9. **Self-controlled** (disciplined life of sound decision-making)
10. **Not a drunk** (free from addictions)
11. **Not a lover of money** (financially content and upright)

Relation to Others:

12. **Respectable** (worth following and imitating)
13. **Hospitable** (welcomes non-Christians, missional motivation)
14. **Not violent** (even tempered)
15. **Gentle** (kind, gracious, loving)
16. **Not quarrelsome** (peaceable, not divisive or argumentative)
17. **Well thought of by outsiders** (respected by non-Christians)

So if elder qualifications are primarily about character things, what do elders “do?” Elders lead the flock, like under-shepherds who follow the Chief Shepherd

1 Peter 5:1-3 *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being*

examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

“Shepherd the flock of God”
Not under compulsion
But willingly
As God would have you - God chooses and affirms elders

“Not for shameful gain - but eagerly”
“Not domineering - but by being examples”

What is perhaps the hardest thing for any elder to say to the church he leads?
2 Timothy 1:13 *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

In other words, an elder has to be able to say what the Apostle Paul said:
1 Corinthians 11:1 *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a man. And He was willingly submissive to the will of His Father. We're told, then to imitate that.

1 Peter 5:5 *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Humility is hard, for leaders, and for those who follow the leaders. Because even though we may be saved by the atoning death of Jesus, we're still capable of great sin.

Paul David Tripp has said this:

“Sinners tend not to esteem authority
Sinners like to write their own rules
Sinners are good at convincing themselves that their wrongs are not that wrong
Sinners tend to believe in their own autonomy
Sinners tend to think they're wiser than they are
Sinners tend to have a moral code that is formed more by their desires than by God's law
Sinners tend to think that they don't need what they don't desire
Sinners tend to be self-focused and self-excusing
Sinners tend to crave what God has prohibited
Sinners tend to opt for short-term pleasure over long-term gain
Sinners tend to rebel rather than submit.”

Because of all this, it is a miracle of amazing grace that any of us ever chooses to obey God. Equally miraculous is that any of us would willingly obey the leaders God places over us.

Colossians 3:12-14 *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaints against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

Jesus' pastoral care for us comes in many forms. Fellowship is Jesus caring enough for each of us that He puts people in our lives to encourage, rebuke and comfort us. Elders are responsible to make sure that happens for all of us.

So what do I want you to know about elders in our church?

- A. **Jesus is the Senior Pastor** (Mike Rydman is not the senior pastor)
- B. **Paul told Titus to "appoint elders" (plural) in every town (church.)** I cannot possibly be the example of everything you need. And, if the church ends up looking and acting just like me, we will be limited. We need multiple examples of godly men to lead us.
- C. When we're looking at men who might serve us as elders in the future, in a practical way we're looking for men who have the "4 C's":
 1. **Calling**
 2. **Character**
 3. **Competency**
 4. **Compatibility**...in that order of importance
- D. Elders have two primary duties. **Acts 6:4** *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.* Elders can easily get busy doing other things, important things, but prayer and teaching the Word of God still remain the two most important things an elder can do to serve the church.
- E. Leaders are responsible to raise up other leaders. **2 Timothy 2:2** *And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.* It's been said that churches have a 20-year lifespan. Churches die primarily because they missed out on raising up other leaders.
- F. Jesus gives elders to the church to equip the people for the work of the ministry. **Ephesians 4:11** *and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*