



# **Message Transcript**

## **How to Treat Church Leaders**

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Lord Jesus, we just thank you for all you're doing in your church, not only here, but around the world and how through the church you're advancing the kingdom with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And Lord, we pray that you would have your way with us this morning, Lord, that you'd be helpful to me as I preach, you'd be helpful to us as we listen and Lord collectively, we together as your church would do what you've called us to do.

And so for everybody who is gathered who desires to hear the word of the Lord proclaimed, who will believe what the Lord says and will by faith put into practice, what he shows you will you very loudly agree with me this morning by saying the word amen, amen. A number of years ago I heard John Maxwell say that everything rises and falls on leadership. And the longer I've been a part of all sorts of different organizations I tend to believe him.

I think that when you have good leadership, good leadership has the ability to empower the people in that organization to go and do great things. So when the organization is good or the family is good, or the sports team is good, it's because there good leadership that's empowering the people in that organization who take ownership of the vision and the mission and go out and accomplish it.

And like my high school football coach used to say, no coaches ever won a game, it's always about the team. And good leadership is always about the team. But I've also seen in organizations and others that I've been a part of and in this one when there's challenges in the organization, it's the leader's fault, that the leader is the lead

for what's going wrong and the leader needs to get introspective and figure out, "Hey, what am I not doing right or what things need to change?"

And I can tell you in leading this organization over the last 11 years, there's been some painful seasons in my life where I've had to change and grow and I'm not done growing. I know there's still going to be other painful seasons where the Lord will continue to shape me and who I am so that Christ can get his work done. And while every organization rises and falls on its leadership, the church of Jesus Christ especially needs good leadership, amen?

Because the church of Jesus Christ is the one institution that Jesus Christ blessed. He said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will never prevail against it." He said that over 2000 years ago. And guess what? His church is still growing strong and hell can't stop what Jesus Christ is doing. And as we've been taking a look in this series in first Timothy talking about God's kingdom agenda for the church and what the church should be and how the church is kingdom soil on this earth, so what happens in this place among us is what we're tasting from heaven so that we can go advance the kingdom of God from his church and how much he cares about the church, today what we're going to take a look at is how much he cares about his leadership in the church.

Last week, we started taking a look at how to care for our family, we took a look at older men and younger men. We took a look at older women and younger women and how we're to treat them. We took a look at widows and how we're to treat them. Today we're going to take a look at leadership and how we as a church are to treat

leadership. Now, when we talked through this book in first Timothy chapter 3, we learned the qualifications of an elder, the integrity that needs to be with an elder.

In chapter 5 here, we're going to learn how it is that we as a church need to respond or treat the leadership in the church. I want to be totally candid with you. I preached a lot, a lot, a lot of messages and I preached a lot of them here. This is one of the hardest messages I've ever had to preach because in some ways what I'm teaching you is here's how you all need to treat me and here's how you need to treat the leaders in our church and here's how you need to treat our staff.

And I want to let you know from the outside, I don't have an ax to grind with any of you, I just don't. I've learned to not use the pulpit as a place to air my dirty laundry. If I had problem with you, I'd come talk to you individually. Secondly, I would say this. I think our church does when I'm going to teach you very, very well. But I think it's important for us to understand that how we treat our leadership is very important to God.

And the church God blesses is in direct response to how God's people respond to the leadership that he places in a church. And even if you say, "Hey, we got it all," I promise you, you're going to meet some people in the body of Christ that need to hear this message and we want to be a church that honors the Lord in every single part of his word when it comes to teaching his word.

So today I'm going to pretend that I'm at a different church, that I'm a guest lecturer, and I'm teaching you what the word of God says about this specific

requirement of how we're to treat leadership in the local church. And we'll be taking a look at four different kinds of leaders and how we're called to respond to each. So if you have your Bible I encourage you to open up to first Timothy chapter 5 I'd like to start reading in verse 17 and read through the end of the chapter and then we'll take a look at those four leaders and how we as a church are called to respond to them.

"Hear the word of the Lord," he says. The elders who rule well are considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing and the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin rebuke in the presence of all so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of his chosen angels to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone to hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others. Keep yourself free from sin. No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some men are quite evident going before them to judgment for others or sins follow after. Likewise, also deeds that are good are quite evident and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed. And here we're going to take a look at four different kinds of leaders in the local church and how we as a church are to respond to each kind of leader. And we're talking specifically this morning about leadership in the church.

Now, why is this so important? Because Jesus Christ loves his church. He established his church, he died for his church and guess who he's coming back for? He's coming back for his church. He loves his church and he is the one who has established leaders in church. So in his church, he has called men and gifted them in certain ways so that they will serve his church and he takes that very seriously.

Just to give you a couple verses, let me tell you about Ephesians chapter 4 versus 11 and 12. Ephesians chapter 4 versus 11 and 12 he says, "And he gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. Who is the one who places authority and leadership in the church?"

It's not rhetoric, I'm going to give you two answers. One is Jesus and the other is whatever you pick. You get to shout it out. Who establishes leadership in his church? I only heard about half of you. So I want to get this right because you need to understand this. Who establishes leadership in his church?

Jesus.

I mean, if you see a pastor in a church, Jesus is the one that has him there. Well, I wouldn't have picked him, Jesus did. He cares seriously about his church and he cares seriously about the leadership in his church and he's gifted some as apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers to do what? To equip the saints to do ministry, to help saints do ministry, to help you fulfill your calling.

The purpose of church leadership is so that the higher body of Christ would be on

mission to reach people with the gospel. Why? Because the church is the one institution of the world that can bring people to salvation in Jesus Christ and grow them up. Is there any institution more important than the church? There's none. No matter what you think, there's none. The church is the most important institution in the world.

Therefore, the leadership in the church is essential and super important to God almighty because he's the one that put them there. Make sense? Right, so he's saying this. And so what do we see about these first kind of leaders? Here's what I would say. In the church, I would say this excellent leaders should be respected and remunerated. Excellent leaders should be respected, that means honored and remunerated, that means paid.

Notice what he says. Here's what he says. The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching for the scripture says from Deuteronomy 25 verse 4, you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing and the laborer is worthy of his wages. That's new testament, that's what Jesus said. Matthew 10:10, and Luke 10:7.

He's using the old and the new testament to say honor and pay your leaders in the church. That's what he's saying. Now who should we pay? Who should we honor? He says the elders who do what? Who rule well. Elders is plural. There's always going to be a plurality of leadership in a church. There's always going to be a plurality. But notice this, the ones who do it well. What does rule mean?

Rule means to guide, rule means to shepherd God's people, rule means to be an

example for them. Rule means to lead them, rule means to take them in the direction God wants them to go. And the word here that you want to pay attention to is well, the one who does it well, the one who does it in an excellent manner. In other words, in every organization and on every team, there are people doing the same thing, but certain people rise above, certain people do it a little bit better.

And he said especially those who do what? Preach and teach. So guiding and leading is important, but especially those who do well at preaching and teaching. What should you be doing with them? How should you treat leadership in the church? With honor, with respect and when worthy you pay them. Now this may come as a surprise to some of you, I'm actually paid to do what I do here.

Now why is it so important that we pay somebody? Because if the church is the foundation of Jesus Christ and there's no more important organization, then the one who is directing that organization through preaching and teaching, which is the primary ministry in a local church, should be taken care of, honored and taken care of in such a way that he and his family can focus exclusively on preaching and teaching.

Now, I don't know what you did this week. I did a lot of different things. I was in meeting about buildings and I went to talk to staff people and did different things, but I can tell you what I was doing for the majority of my week. I was in first Timothy chapter 5 verses 17 through the end of the chapter, laboring in the word, trying to discern from the Lord as I prayed to him, what does our church need to hear and why does our church need to hear this and why is this in the text and why do people need to understand what you're trying to say?



That's where I labored, that's why I was up till 1:00 in the morning last night, putting, finishing touches on what I'm doing, that's why I was here at 5:00 this morning, because I want to make sure that God's people hear God. Let me ask you something. What's more important in your life than hearing the Lord and being able to respond to him? What? There's nothing more.

I mean, any other job that I would take would be a downgrade from what I have the privilege of being called to do as a servant of the Lord. I believe in the kingdom, it is the most important service. That's why he says, "Take care of people and pay them well and do this well, especially those who preach and teach." Now, what does that mean? Some are specifically called to do this task.

This is not a job where you would fill out a job application and take an inventory and say, "I was thinking about being a teacher. I was thinking about being a pastor. I was thinking about being a coach, which one is it?" There's a compelling that goes off inside somebody while you're trying to figure that out. And if you're called to preach and teach, you will not be able to escape it.

You can try to run from it, you can say, "I don't want this," but eventually it's going to come back and you have to do this. The compelling that I have, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel is not something that I say mildly, it's what else could I do with my life? I'm going to answer to the Lord for the calling that he put on it to preach and teach. And it's important that you understand that calling.

Now a number of years ago, I remember telling my wife shortly after we were

married, "I know how God works in my life," that he was doing something different. And I didn't know what it was going to be, but that what we were currently doing was going to change. And I didn't even know what that meant, but I told her, "Just be praying with me because something's going to change, something's going to happen."

And I was getting bored doing what I was doing, but I still wanted to serve the Lord. And sure enough, I had a friend that was on the board with Athletes in Action, it's an international ministry. And he said to me, "We're looking for an international president, you need to apply." And I said, "Well, what would I do?" He said, "Here's what you'd do. There's about 6,000 people on staff that you would train every single year to go all over the world that are athletes and they love sports and they take the gospel out so that you can reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

By the way, you'd get to go to the Super Bowl every year, you would also get to disciple professional athletes and all these different kinds of things." And so I hung up the phone and I was like, "We're going." So we set up the interview and I had an interview with these guys and went super well with this one man. And at the end of it, I said, "What do you think?" He goes, "I think we need to move to step two." I said, "I do too." I said, "I really sense that this could be something that the Lord has for us."

And we went on to step number two and in the second interview process, there were two men on the phone and we were talking and the second conversation went just as well as the first until the last two minutes of the conversation. Because at the end we were asking each other, "How do you think it went?" And both men were like, "This could be it. We really like who you are." But the one guy that wasn't on the phone

the first time, he said, "I just have one question for you."

He goes, "Are you a leader that has some preaching and teaching gifts to bolster your leadership gift or are you a preacher and teacher that has some leadership gifts to bolster your preaching? Because we're looking for a leader. If you never preach or teach again, we don't care, just lead." And I remember thinking, "Shucks!" But I gave the Christian answer and I was like, "Well, I'll pray about it."

And what happened was within 24 hours I called him back and said, "No, I'm called to preach. I know I have to preach. And so thanks for that." Now you clap but at the time I didn't know what that meant. But it wasn't but a couple months later when I was vetting what was going to go on and I had a phone call learning about how we could plant a church and the man on the other end said to me, "Hey, can you preach?" Said, "Yes." He said, "Can you cast vision?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Can you call up men?" I said, "Yes."

I said, "What else?" He goes, "That's it." We'll staff around you." I said, "I'm in." And I told my wife that day, "We're moving to Denver and plant a church." Because there has to be a compelling and a calling to preach and teach. It's essential in the church of God. Now why is that important? And I'm not speaking for this church. Just so you know, this church has always taken care of me and my family financially and this church has always been honoring to me.

Now you might say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, how much money do you make?" To which my response would be, how much money do you make? Now, how much money

do you give? I mean, the deal is all throughout our histories of church, the elders have always put into practice what my salary's going to be. About four years ago, as we grew, our elders decided to come together and work with a national organization that had tens of thousands of people, that they had research and several organizations and churches and parachurch ministries and organizations of our size and what their background was and what their ministry looked like and how much education they had.

And they put all this stuff in a grid and then they said, "Based upon those, here's how you're paying your pastor. And if you want to pay them like this, then this is what you'd pay your pastor." And they made all the decisions about what my income would be. And I just want you to know, they've always taken good care of me. And I think that that's important. And let me tell you why I think that's important.

Because there's too many pastors out there that are trying to labor in the word and bring the word of God to God's people and that church doesn't honor their pastor and that church doesn't pay for their pastor and I'm telling you from this pulpit, that's downright sinful and it's wrong. It's wrong. I got golf claps all last message too, I'm totally cool with that. Because I'm not just preaching to you, I'm preaching for everybody out there that's trying to labor in the word that ends up leaving the ministry because the church doesn't support their calling to bring God's word to them.

And just so you know, it's rare in our culture if you can be in a church with somebody that's actually going to preach this book. It's a rare thing. If you haven't, you should be thankful for it. And if you're thankful for it, you should honor the people that are bringing that. You should honor your pastor, you should honor your leadership. You

should honor the staff. You should honor those who are volunteers. You should honor everybody and you should pay well those in leadership, especially those whose main ministry is preaching and teaching according to the word of God.

He says, look at this, he goes, "Even we don't muzzle the ox while it's threshing." I mean even an ox is able to eat while it's working. I mean, you're more important than an ox if you're leading in God's church. And the labor is worthy of his wages. It Means in churches take care of your pastors and their staff and their families and honor them. In the book of Ezra, we read in Ezra chapter 7 and verse 10, for Ezra had set his heart to study the law and to practice it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel.

Well, what did he do? How do you sum that up? He studied the word, he practiced the word and he taught and preached the word. What's my responsibility as your pastor? Study the word, put into practice what God's showing me in the word and then herald the word. That's my job. And I want to tell you this, God blesses churches that bless their leadership. I have never seen a church flourish that talks bad about their leadership, ever.

I have never seen a church flourish that complains about their leadership, ever. I've never seen it. But I have seen churches flourish when people in the church honor the leadership in that church. I remember one time I was at the Billy Graham Library in North Carolina. And if you've ever been down there, they walk you through the gospel as you're going through Billy Graham's life. And it's pretty moving. I mean, it was pretty awesome.

And I came out through the end of that and there was somebody there to pray with me asking me this, "Would you like to give your life to Jesus Christ?" And I said, "I already have." And they said, "Well, that's great. Well, can I pray for you?" I said, "I'd love that." This lady laid hands on me and prayed over me as if Jesus was standing right there. Powerful prayer. We got done, I said, "Hey, where are you from?" She said, "Brooklyn." I said, "Brooklyn."

I said, "Where'd you go to church?" She goes, "I go to Brooklyn Tabernacle." I said, "Well of course you do because everybody there prays like you." And I said, "I've always been fond of pastor Jim Cymbala from a distance." She goes, "Oh, I know him, he's an awesome pastor. We love pastor Jim. We love who he is. We love that." Every time I go to Brooklyn Tabernacle, I don't care if I'm meeting an usher, a children's worker, whoever, they speak well about their pastor.

And when I see them speak well about their pastor, one thing I notice when I visit is the Holy Spirit is all over that place. Why is this so important? Because God won't bless a church when God's people are complaining and grumbling about the leadership in the church, it doesn't work. Well, let's just get that pastor out of there. No, if they got your grumbling and complaining to stop, it would help first. That's what he's saying. He says especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Let me give you a couple other verses that you can look at this week. How about first Thessalonians chapter 5 versus 12 and 13 as far as appreciation or honor. He says this, "But we were request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who

diligently labor among you and have charge over you and the Lord and give you instructions and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."

What's it saying? Appreciate your leadership, be grateful for your leadership. How about first Corinthians chapter 9 versus 13 and 14? Paul was saying, you didn't have to take advantage of this, but he was saying where the worker is worthy of. First Corinthians chapter 9 verse 13 he says, "Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?"

Verse 14, "So also the Lord directed those who proclaimed the gospel to get their living from the gospel." How should preachers get paid? They should get paid for preaching the gospel, that's how they should get paid. Do you know why that's important. Pastor Jeff, have you ever heard of bi-vocational pastors? Yes I have. And if our congregation were 15 people and the average salary was 15 to \$30,000, I get that. I'd be bi-vocational too. That's not the case that we have here.

Sometimes even when people are generous, it requires a bi-vocational work. But you wouldn't want me to do bi-vocational work. You wouldn't want me to be casual on a Saturday night, kind of stringing something together and then during the week, giving all my labor and intensity to a different job. And you certainly wouldn't want me to be working for Amway where I'd tell you, "Hey, after first Tuesday we have a meeting at 8 o'clock and I want to tell you about toilet paper," right?

You want me solo focused on the word of God because it's God's people, who do you want to hear? You come because you want to hear the Lord. So it says honor a pastor and pay them. Now you might ask, "Well, how do I support a pastor?" Like, "What does it look like to support the elders? What does it look like to support a staff? How do I do that? What would that look like?" I'll give you five ways, and I'm doing these in order on purpose.

The number one way you can do it is be generous. Be financially generous to the church. So what about prayer? That's coming. Number one, be financially generous to the church. Do you know why? Because if you're financially generous, you won't complain. I've been a pastor now for 11 years here. I don't look at what everybody gives. I don't check your giving records because I don't know what's generous to you may not be so generous to someone else. I'm not trying to measure all that.

But I will tell you, what I do do is when somebody is critical of me or my wife and my family consistently, every single time I see them, I'll have one of our elders say, "Hey, would you do me a favor? Would you just check and see if this person gives financially to our church? Because I want to know if they just have a critical thought that we can kind of work through, if they have a critical spirit."

Do you know 100% of the time I've asked that question, they come back said they're not given anything. They stopped giving six months ago, they stopped giving a year ago, they've never given to your church. And I'm like, "Well, duh." You can't financially contribute generously and have a critical spirit. You say, "Well, what's



generous?" How about this? How about start with a tithe? That's just a minimum. That means 10% of all of your net that you bring home just start, just say, "God, that's all yours. Not even going to touch, that just goes to my church."

Do you know if everybody did that we'd never have to do a fundraiser? You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, we're new testament Christians, we don't even have to tithe." You are absolutely correct, you don't. So let's talk about the law a little bit, shall we? Old testament, do not murder new testament, don't even think your brother's an idiot. Old testament, don't commit adultery, new testament, don't even lust at somebody with your eyes that's not your spouse.

Old testament, 10%, but also the feast and festivals, if you add it all up, somewhere around 23%. New testament, what is it? God says, "I own 100% of everything you have and be generous to me." So tithing would be like bare minimum to start. And oh, by the way, if you tithe you won't ever run out because God will see that you're generous to him. And when you're generous to him, he'll be generous to you. So be financially generous.

You say, "Well, this is my last time at BRAVE, I'm never coming back." Great. When you go join your next church, make your first day of the day you're going to be financially generous to that church. Wherever you go, be financially generous. Oh, by the way, just so you know because this is a disclaimer, my salary's not based upon how much you give. It's not based upon that. It's not as if you get more and then I have ownership in the company and I have all sorts of stock options at the end of the year or something like that.

We're giving generously to the things of the Lord. Amen? Number two is this, be serving, be faithful in your service to the Lord. It's hard to come with a humble spirit and serve in the church and then be critical of the people that are trying to help you do that better. I find it's easy to sit on the sidelines and complain. It's easy to look into another organization and have comments. That's the reason I go to Broncos' games, it's good therapy for me.

I can look at somebody else's organization. I can see what they're doing. I can have opinions about that because I'm not involved and I'm not invested. I remember one time a number of years ago, I was watching a football game with my high school football coach and I remember watching this play and it was like a third in one and they called the stupidest play ever. And I remember saying to my coach, I'm like, "Why would somebody call stupid play like that?" And he was just silent.

And I got the message really clear that, "Hey, you're talking about a coach." I'm a coach. I understand coaching in a way you don't understand coaching and I'll always back coaches. Let me tell you something. I'm a pastor. I love pastors. I'm four pastors because Jesus is for pastors, which means I don't have ears for you to talk bad about your last pastor. Because I know when somebody comes into BRAVE Church and starts talking about the last church they were in and how bad it was and what the pastor was like, I know it's only a matter of time until they're at that next church talking about me and BRAVE Church the same way.

Friends, I don't have ears for that garbage. God hates that. He hates that. Don't

talk bad about another pastor and don't ever talk bad about another church, don't.

God's Holy Spirit can do the work that you can't do. Amen? So be financially involved, be as generous as you can, be generous with your time and serve. Number three, be prayerful, pray. Pray for your leadership in the church. Pray for the staff. Pray for the elders. Pray for your pastor.

Say, "Lord, help him understand your word in a new way. Help him bring something on Sundays that speaks directly to my heart. Lord, I'm praying for him. I'm praying for his wife. I'm praying for his kids. I'm praying for the health of his family so he can be focused on bringing us what you need." Be prayerful. How about this one? Be thankful for your pastor. Be thankful for your leadership. If you're in a church where the word of God is being heralded, where worship is taking place, where prayer is essential and evangelism is happening and people are seeking the face of the Lord and his Holy Spirit is all over the place, be thankful for that.

It's rare. It doesn't happen everywhere. That's the spirit of God working through his people. And then how about this final one? Be gracious with your words and actions towards your leadership and his family. Be gracious with your words and your actions. See, when people talk bad about my wife, it hurts me. People talk bad about my kids, it hurts me. When people talk bad about our staff, it hurts me. I'm going to protect all those people.

God says, if you're in the congregation, those should be the people that feel the most love to walk in the door. And I'm telling you in some churches, that's just not the case. I have pastor friends that go in to church on a Sunday morning, takes everything

they have because they know that the people that they're talking to have hatred in their eyes towards them and their families. May it never or be. And again, thank you BRAVE Church because I don't feel that way about you. I don't, I don't.

But you're going to have people and you're going to have friends and you're going to hear somebody sometimes talk about their pastor, talk about their church, and here's what you're going to do. You're going to go, "Jesus loves them and he died for them. And he's in charge of them and it's not our job to talk bad about them." Amen? Excellent leaders should be respected and remunerated. They should be honored and they should be paid.

Second is this. Godly leaders should be protected from false accusation. Talk about the excellent leaders, let's talk about godly leaders. They should be protected from false accusation. Notice what the word says. He says, "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses." In other words, when people accuse the leadership in a church, unless there's two or three people that can establish proof that this is true, don't listen to it.

In other words, you can't judge other people's motives because you don't know what their motives are. You may think you do, but you don't. You can't judge other people's attitudes because you don't know what their attitude is and you can't judge based upon your perception. You can judge behavior in which we're going to get to in a bit. But for many people in the church, they want to judge an attitude, they want to judge a motive.

They want to say, "Well, why are we going to this way? And why are we doing that? And how come we're doing this? And I don't know if I like that anymore. And how come he gets to decide? How come we don't get to decide?" Has that ever happened in church before? Let me tell you a story from the old testament just to clear your thinking a little bit so you'll understand. It's referred to in the Bible as Korah's rebellion.

Korah came to Moses one time with two other men, Dathan and Abiram. And they came and here's what they said to Moses. This is after Moses was chosen by God to be his instrument to lead the people of Israel. Who chose Moses? God did. Did Moses want the job? Was Moses on jobs.com looking for deliverer? No, he didn't want the job. He was happy being a shepherd. God called him. Moses didn't want to go, God made him go.

He goes and begins to do everything God says. So through Moses, God's going to bring plagues, through Moses, God's going to protect the people, through Moses, they learn how to paint blood on a doorframe signifying the spotless lamb that one day is going to come, Jesus Christ. Through Moses, they're delivered out of Egypt, through Moses, even when the Egyptians are coming after them, Moses holds out his staff, through Moses, God parts the Red Sea, through Moses, God closes it.

Through Moses, God provides manna, through Moses, God provides quail, through Moses, God provides water. It's through Moses God is doing every good and perfect thing for the nation of Israel. Do you think they'd be happy with Moses? Well, they're not. In Numbers chapter 16 when Korah comes with his two buddies, here's

what they say to him. And they rose up before Moses together with some of the sons of Israel, 250 leaders of the congregation chosen in the assembly, men of renowned.

Now let me make a point here. We just got done saying where there's not two or three witnesses don't listen. Here's what you're going to have here, 250 witnesses. So it's not how many people you gather in rebellion, it's how true the charges are. Makes sense? It's not about, "Whoa, I don't like Pastor Jeff, I'm going to get 20 people against him. It's not that." We're going to talk about what that is in a minute.

So here's what they're going to do, they're going to say something to Moses. They're going to rise in rebellion, here's what they're going to say to him. They assemble together against Moses and Aaron. Here's what they said to them, "You have gone far enough. For all the congregation are holy, every one of them and the Lord is in their midst. So why do you exalt yourself above the assembly of the Lord?" You know what they're saying?

Who puts you in charge? The spirit of God's with all of us. Do you not understand he loves all of Israel? It'd be like today. Do you not understand he loves all the church? Pastor Jeff, do you not understand the Holy Spirit dwells in all of us? Pastor Jeff, do you not understand the priesthood of believers? Pastor Jeff, do you not understand we're all the same? That's what they're saying. And here's in reality what they're saying.

We don't want you to be the one to lead us. We think we're every bit as gifted as you and we want to do that. Do you think it's going to go well for him? It's not going to

go well at all. Moses and Aaron fall in their face and begin to intercede for them. Do you know why? Because when that charge comes against them, Moses and Aaron are like, "Oh, oh, that's not good. God's not going to like this. He picked us." And he doesn't like it when his anointed are being messed with for no good reason. So they begin to pray.

And here's what Moses said, "Hey, let's gather tomorrow and see what the Lord does. You all bring your sensors and you light them, we'll light ours. We'll appear at the tented meeting. Let's just see what the Lord says and who he's for." The next day they appear at the tented meeting, which is where the presence of the Lord was. And you know what God said? God told Moses and Aaron, "Stand back, I'm going to kill the whole assembly."

Now at that time, because there's certain days in ministry, if I were Moses and Aaron, I would've been like, "Cool." And, "You're God, I'm just a man." I mean, right? That's not what they do. They get on their face and intercede and they say, "No Lord. Don't kill the entire congregation just because they're being rebellious." So the Lord takes them in front of the tent of the three men who have been causing problems and here's what Moses said, "If these men die a natural death, you know that God's not with me. But if the earth opens up and they are swallowed and go straight to hell right now, you will know that it's the Lord."

And he was no sooner done speaking that the earth opened up and voom, they're all gone. And you know what happened? Everybody starts running around like, "We got to get out of here, we're going to go down there too." And then guess what happens.

At that very same moment, those same 250, God smoked them, went [inaudible 00:33:55], they all turned to charcoal. That was the end of that day.

Now, if you were Israel, would you think, "Maybe we shouldn't mess with God's anointed." But they didn't think that. So you know what? The next day Israel woke up and like, "You killed all our leaders. Now we have nobody to lead anymore." And Moses and Aaron are like, "Oh no God, don't hurt them too." And a plague broke out and started killing everybody until Moses and Aaron did what they needed to do to stop the plague.

On day two, 14,700 people died not including the 250 plus the families the day before. Nearly 15,000 people died in 24 hours because they challenged God's anointed. Does God take the leadership of his church and his congregation serious? Answer is yes. When you talk bad about a pastor, when you talk bad about elders, when you talk bad about another church, you are badmouthing God. So stop it. That's what it means. So here's what he says.

I mean, here's a verse for you. First Chronicles chapter 16 in verse 22, Psalm 105 verse 15, it's repeated in the scripture so you understand it means what it means. Do not touch my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm. Now I know the Bible well enough and I know context well enough to know these, talk about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and how he was faithful to them to get them into the promised land, I get all that. But I'm telling you, God still takes his leadership in his church seriously because he's the one that selected them.



You might think in your heart, "I would've never selected them." And here's what God would say to you, "I choose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." Don't ever, never ever, ever never, never ever, ever, ever, ever talk bad about a church or a pastor or a group of elders, ever. That's what the word's teaching, all right? Brings conviction, doesn't it? That's why it's been dead silent in both services when I say that.

Because there's things that go off in our heart and Satan goes into our ear and like, "I'm going to talk bad about him and I'm going to talk bad about my last church." Don't ever do it. God doesn't honor it, he doesn't bless it. He doesn't bless grumbling nor complaining. And here's what he says. He wants his people to be submissive to their leadership. Here's a verse for you. Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17, obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

You see that? Obey your leaders and submit to them. Pause for effect. How hard is that? Well, I'll do it if they go the direction I want to go. I'll do it if they're doing everything I want to do. You will never find a church in this world that does everything you want to do. You will never find a leader you agree with 100%. You won't. Well, I'm going to get in there and give him a piece of my mind.

Friends, do you realize your prayer is way more powerful than your mouth? A king's heart is like channels of water in the Lord's hands, he can turn up wherever he wishes. If you'd spend as much time praying for leadership as you do talking about it,

God would do great things. And how sober is this? Leaders give an account for your souls. Doesn't mean I even know every one of you, but I'm held accountable to every word I'm saying from this pulpit. That's sobering.

Let them do this with joy and not grief for this would be unprofitable for you. Have you ever noticed there's certain people in your life that are a plus? Like every time you're around them, it's like, "Ah, so life giving." I mean, you just kind of want to be around them again and again because every time you're around them you don't know if they're getting anything from you, but you're just like, "These people are great."

And then you got the people that are kind of neutral. You know, it's good for them, it's good for you, you're not going to leave any happier anywhere. It's good. And then there's those minuses. They're kind of like a Hoover vacuum cleaner and you see them coming down the hallway and it's like they're coming just to suck the absolute life out of you, right? He's saying, "Don't be that kind of person in the congregation. Don't be the Hoover vacuum cleaner that's sucking the life out of the leadership."

Be invested and serve and be generous and be supportive and be gracious and be kind and be thankful. Why? Because God doesn't want his anointed to be touched with false accusations. You say, "What about the rest of the congregation?" Well, the rest of the congregation God's given us instructions in Matthew chapter 18. When you see another person in sin, you go point it out to them. And if they've wronged you and if they repent, you've won your brother back or you've won your sister back.

If they don't listen, what does he say? Take two or three people with you to

establish it. And we're seeing something consistent here, we see it's the same thing in the old testament. Establish it. Hey, we're seeing this. This is a behavior in you. If they still don't listen, take it to the church. If they still don't listen, then address it publicly, right? But don't listen to false accusations.

Well I know for a fact this, then get two or three people because your job is not pointing out sin, your job is seeing God restore somebody who has fallen. It's having the right heart, right? Right. Well, does this mean I've seen this scripture abused, I've seen it mean, "Well, you can't talk to me, I'm your pastor. I'm God's anointed. You can't call me on anything." I think that's false. I think it's 100% false because the Bible says it's 100% false.

Because look at the next verse. Not only should excellent leaders be respected and remunerated and godly leaders should be protected from false accusation, but notice this, sinning leaders should be rebuked without partiality. Sinning leaders should be rebuked without partiality. Notice what he says. Those who continue in sin rebuke in the presence of all so that the rest will also be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and of his chosen angels to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of personality.

What's he saying? He's saying you can't judge a person's attitude because you don't know it, you can't judge their motives, you don't know it. You can't just judge based upon your perception because you may be wrong, but you can judge behavior. You can judge behavior. When you see somebody do something that's wrong, you can judge that. You can have two or three witnesses that can say, "Hey Pastor Jeff, what

you're doing is wrong, you're continuing to sin," that's fine.

Now notice what I said. I said, sinning, that's continuing to sin. Let's be clear. Every elder sins. You know why? Because every person's sinful. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And if we made it so that you had to be perfect before you could lead in the church, nobody would lead. It's not saying, "Hey, I want you guys to watch Pastor Jeff and I want you to watch the elders. Have you ever noticed him sin one time? If Jeff ever gets frustrated with his wife, he's out of here," right?

I mean, has that ever happened, once or twice? That's not what he's talking about. He's talking, is there a consistency of sin pattern here that's hurting him, which is in turn hurting the congregation? He says you got to rebuke that. And who do you rebuke it in front of? All. That's everybody. You say, "Why do you rebuke it in front of all?" Because the ministry he's having is in front of all. You say, "Well, who should know about a person's sin?"

Here's what I would say. The sphere of influence that a leader has should determine the sphere of influence of the discipline of rebuke. I mean, right now we're on the radio all over the country. Right now we're on the internet being watched all over the world. Right now we're on two different campuses. So if I were consistently in sin and being rebuked on it, who would need to know? All those people.

Is that sobering or what? Super sobering. You say, "Well I'm in a small group and this person, they're having an adulterous relationship." Let's bring them up on the

platform and tell everybody about it. No. It happened in your small group, not everybody knows who they are. That's the scope. That's the extent, right? This person's serving in children's ministry. And everybody in children's ministry knows who they are, then we got to tell everybody in children's ministry.

Do you see that? What is he talking about leaders? Leaders are known by all. So who are they getting rebuked in front of? All. Now why is this important? Because in most churches he says, "Do this without partiality." You know what that means? That means do this without prejudice and without passivity. There's two errors that you can make here, one's with prejudice.

I've been waiting for that pastor to fall, I'm so glad he's out of here now. I'm so mad at him. And we do it with this prejudice like, "I'm going to get him and his family. I've never liked that guy." That's wrong. Because what's the purpose of discipline? It's to restore somebody, right? It's also wrong to be passive. It's also wrong to say, "Well, he's had a great ministry, he's awesome. I mean yeah, he slept with a few prostitutes, but everybody sins, no big deal. Let's just kind of cover that up and not tell anybody. And I don't want to hurt the church." Wrong.

If there's significant ongoing sin, it's got to be rebuked, then it's got to be rebuked in front of all those that he's been lying to. Friends, this is sobering, this is sobering to study this week. It's sobering to know that it's true. It's sobering to know that if I ever sin, this will be the message online that everybody's watching because it's true. It doesn't mean that God's anointed can't be disciplined.

And I've seen too often where elder teams rally around a pastor because character is the only thing that matters, not vision. I didn't like his vision, he's out. No, no, no. It's character. And so many times people know the characters often, and they've seen that the character's off, but they're too scared to pull the trigger for fear that it's going to hurt people. It's way worse if you don't tell people the truth. Just tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

It's painful, but it's true, right? And that's what he's talking about here. So sinning leaders should be rebuked. Are we called to judge others? We all are, we're not to judge non-believers. You know why? Because non-believers are already under God's judgment. They're already under his wrath. They're being judged in hell for all eternity unless they repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ.

The reason we need messages from this pulpit is to let people know that if you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins that you can repent and believe even him right now and be out of God's judgment. But for those of us who are already out of God's judgment and the penalty of sin, we rebuke each other. We encourage each other because we're growing in sanctification, that plenty of people in my life that have rebuked me, told me, "Hey, see the way you are with your son," or, "here's how you are with your daughters," or, "here's what I've noticed about you and you and I think you need to pray about that and I think you need to think about that."

And when people I know love me tell me those things, I listen, right? That's what

he is talking about. We're called to rebuke one another. We're not called to be the Holy Spirit in each other's life and just come to church and say, "Today I'm going to find five people that need to repent. I'm going to find them." That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about in your sphere of influence when you care for somebody's soul and you want to see them walk with Christ and you're aware of a sin in their life, you're going to begin to point it out so they have opportunities to repent. Amen?

Sinning leaders should be rebuked without partiality. And then for finally is this let's talk about immature leaders. When I say immature, I'm not talking about childish, I'm talking about spiritually immature, I talk about ones that are growing. Immature leaders should be vetted prior to being appointed. Immature leaders should be vetted prior to being appointed. Now we just got done saying, I solemnly charge you this in the presence of God and his angels. The other place he talks about that is when he says preach the word.

He goes, "This is a solemn charge. Take care of sinning elders." And then he says this with immature elders, make sure they're vetted before being appointed. Notice what he says. He says, "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others. Keep yourself free from sin." He says, "Let people grow in maturity before you appoint them to a leadership position that's beyond what they're ready to take right now."

All of us start as spiritual babes in Christ. None of us are born again into maturity. It takes time, there's nothing wrong with having some maturing to grow before you get appointed to a position of elder or leadership in the church. But let me give you four

areas that are important to be an elder in the church, four areas. One is integrity. Integrity means that person meets all the biblical qualifications and does not waiver. That's first Timothy 3 and Titus 1, we never waiver on that.

If you do not have the character, you cannot assume the role, period end of story. Second is maturity. Maturity is spiritually this person has shown a growing maturity in the Lord in several ways. We're not talking about age. Person could be younger, but they need to be spiritually mature. They need to be able to handle the mantle of leadership. Third is theology. If we're going to put somebody in position, they need to agree on all the closed handed theological issues and some of the open handed ones that we all align with in our church.

Let me tell you what I mean. Let me tell about what closed handed issues are. This means that any church, anywhere, anytime these should be closed handed issues. Unfortunately in our culture, they're not, but they should be. I'll give you seven. One is belief in the trinity, that our Godhead is made up of father, son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons, one essence God. Number two, the full deity and humanity of Jesus, that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully God at the same time.

Third, the spiritual lossness of the human race that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Fourth, the son substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead, which means that Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried and rose from the dead and that's the only way we can experience salvation. Number five, salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone,



there is no other way to get to God except through him.

Six is the physical return of Jesus Christ. He is coming back and ruling on this planet. And seven is the authority and inerrancy of scripture. Those are close handed. You waiver on any of that, you can't lead into church, period, end of story. But there's also some open handed issues and things that we believe at BRAVE and maybe not everybody does. And it means they can still be saved, but they don't believe exactly like we believe. What would some of those things be?

We believe in a literal six day creation here. We believe that men and women are different here and have different roles. We believe that men are the head of the household. We're going to champion women, but we're never going to have women pastors here. We're open to all the gifts, we are not cessationists, we believe that God is still working today, the way he always does. All those different things, open handed, there'll be people in heaven that don't agree with that and we'll all tell them that they were wrong while they were on the earth and that's cool.

But I'm kidding, kind of. but we want to be aligned in our leadership. Why? Because we're all going the same way. And if we're not sane and living the same way, it doesn't work. And after integrity, maturity and theology, there has to be philosophy. There's a philosophy of ministry that says I agree on how we're making disciples, I agree on how we're setting up leadership, I agree on the vision, I agree where we're going. I love the methodology. I can submit myself to the leadership in the church doing that because if somebody's gets on an elder team and is serving in such a way, but doesn't agree with everybody else, it just causes schism.

And so it's important that leaders should be vetted prior to being appointed. As you know, we've appointed elders last month at first Tuesday will point some more of this first Tuesday, we will be doing that continuing on for the foreseeable future as we continue to vet more and more people, and we're trusting the Lord to continue to bring us more leadership and elders in our church. And then he goes on and talks about this.

Verse 23 is really odd. You wouldn't think it would fit right here. Notice what he says. No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. And some are saying, "Man, that's like my life verse." That's not what it means by the way. It's interesting because he's just gotten done talking about him living pure and talking about the qualifications of an elder.

In all likelihood, Timothy probably took a vow of abstinence from alcohol. And Timothy wanted to be a leader in the church and model that you don't need to drink and that he's pure before the Lord, but yet he had these stomach ailments. And they didn't have TUMS and roll aids and different things like that in the first century. And so wine was often used as a way to be medicinal, to help with stomach ailments.

A couple things I see here. Number one, the apostle Paul had the ability to heal, and yet he wasn't able to heal Timothy or didn't he choose to heal Timothy at that time. It means I believe God still heals, but it doesn't mean he heals every single person every single time we want to get him healed. Sometimes God uses other methods to heal people. Amen? Secondly, I believe this. I believe Paul was saying to him, "Don't let your religious vow get in the way of your health, continue to serve the church."

Notice he says mix a little wine in there. He doesn't say have three bottles a day until you're just kind of loopy. He says, "Put a little wine in there for your stomach so that you can be healthy enough to do the ministry and don't worry about taking the little wine, and don't worry about the vow that you made. Worry about making sure that the gospel gets out." That's what he was saying. In other words, don't make this religious vow that I never get in the way of you being able to serve the way God wants you to serve, that's what he was talking about. He wasn't encouraging him to sin in any way.

And then he says this, as he talks about vetting these younger elders. Notice what he says. He talks about the bad that we can see in people and the good that we can see in people. He says the sins of some men are quite evident going before them to judgment. Here's what he says. There's some people you'll just see and you'll say no way will we ever put them in leadership. There's like no way or at least not now. They either need to know Jesus or if they know Jesus, they have a lot of sanctification before they can get there.

I mean, their sins are so evident to me and everybody else, there's no way this person's cantankerous. I mean, their sins are obvious to everybody. So he says vet people so that but he says for some people, for others, their sins follow after. In other words, even the greatest vetting process in the world can't uncover every person's true self. Did you know that? You ever known somebody for a period of years and you thought something about them a certain way only to find out they've been hiding something for years?

And it's painful. He says even when elders do a good job of other elders, there's

going to be times that you've vetted and you've done your due diligence and you've seen those things, only that those things rise later. It means this. There's no way to pick perfect church leadership. And we got to trust the Lord for what he's going to do. Amen? And he says the good works the same way as the bad.

Notice what he says in verse 25. Likewise, also deeds that are good are quite evident. There's some people you just see and you're like, "They're walking with the Lord. They love the Lord, they love their family. They love this church. They love integrity. They say no to these things and yes to these things. It's obvious to everybody in the church that they qualify. And then there are those which otherwise cannot be concealed. In other words, there's some.

You don't see the fruit yet. They're newer to the faith. Maybe they're a little spiritually immature, but over time as they keep coming to church and they keep getting disciplined and they keep growing. All of a sudden, you start seeing this fruitful vine growing from their heart and you're like, "Wow, it's there. It's happening and we're starting to see that." Isn't it interesting that we need to know this?

We need to know how to honor and respect and pay excellent elders. We need to know how godly elders need to be protected from false accusations. But we need to also understand that sinning elders need to be rebuked without partiality and we need to understand that immature leaders need to be vetted prior to being appointed. Why? Because the gospel's at stake. Eternity is at stake. Heaven and hell is at stake. So goes the leadership so goes church so goes the world, we need godly leadership in

the church. Amen?

And I can tell you this with all my heart and I want to end by telling you this and if Kim were up here standing by my side, which you will be in a minute, I'll tell you this. Both of us feel very honored by this church. I feel very honored to serve as your pastor and be an elder in this church. Over the last 11 years, you've made us feel honored. You've taken care of me and my family you've loved us well, you've done great. I love this church.

There's no other place I'd rather be standing on Sunday than right here in this church. And it's not because of the title on the side of the church called BRAVE Churches because of the people that gather. It's because of the people that are part of our assembly. It's because of you that I love this church, because of you that my wife loves this church.

God is doing this in and through us. He's building something special and as we honor his word, to honor leadership, the way God wants. His Holy Spirit will get a hold of us and do things that we could only dare ask or imagine. He's taken us places that we don't even know about yet and it's going to be awesome and it's because of you that God's doing that. Amen? Amen. Can I just invite you to stand?

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory honor and praise for who you are and I praise you for your people and I praise you for this church. I praise you that this message is not a rebuke, it's an encouragement of thank you. I praise you Lord that you're going to grow us in this and that through growing us in this, that mutually we're

going to work together to advance your kingdom with the gospel through the church that you love. And Lord, we give you all the honor, we give you all the glory, we give you all the praise in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for his word this morning?