

Leadership for the Church
Ephesians 4:11-16, Acts 20:17-31

A Christian is someone who responds to Jesus and His invitation to receive the free gift of Eternal Life from Him.

1 John 5:11 this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

1 John 5:12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. NKJV

After salvation, Jesus invites Christians to experience Abundant Life by following His will for their lives. Jesus would say, “*Trust Me and walk in the plan I have for you!*”

After salvation, there is also a requirement for those who want to be greatly used by the Lord for His Kingdom purposes.

Mark 9:35 He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." NKJV

Please open your Bibles to two places this morning. Please open to ***Acts 20***, place a bookmark there, and then to ***Ephesians 4***.

On Sunday afternoons, beginning in February there will be some new leaders’ information meetings. As we continue to grow, we need leaders who love Jesus and want to serve Him here.

I am asking you to pray and ask the Lord if He wants you to have any sort of leadership position within this fellowship.

Like any family or organization, there are always potential dangers lurking. So, we need good leaders to serve Jesus and help protect our fellowship.

Specifically, our church needs Deacons, Deaconesses, Elders, and other servants for Christ's body.

God in His wisdom gave us a blueprint to recognize leaders.

I. Spiritual leaders, given to profit the Body.

Read *Ephesians 4:11-12*

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV

God uses the church to bring out the best in His children and as we grow and minister with each other; the Lord's plan is to make us more like Christ and bring out the best in His kids.

Why does Living Faith Fellowship exist?

- *We exist as a church to bring Praise and Glory to our King, Jesus Christ. (Through worship, service, unity)*
- *We exist to share the Gospel with the lost.*
- *We exist to make disciples, equipping the Saints (teaching).*
- *We exist to encourage each other in fellowship.*

The Lord, in His wisdom and direction places different parts of His body where He desires to fulfill His purposes.

When a body of believers is obediently **following** His plan there is fruit, growth, joy, and unity. But the opposite is also true.

When parts of the body seek to disrupt the proper order of things, it can lead to chaos and division. As followers of Christ, we are all people under authority, with Christ as the Head.

There is no one alive that is not under some authority, and Jesus is glorified when members use spiritual gifts to serve each other.

Paul gave a list of different leadership positions within the body, and we have covered them before. Let's focus on the office of pastor for a minute.

- **Pastor/Teacher:** the under **shepherd** of a flock.

The word Pastor is synonymous with other New Testaments words such as shepherd, elder, bishop, or overseer.

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; NKJV

The primary function of a Pastor is to feed and protect the sheep from false teachers and the nourishment a pastor is to give his congregation is the Word of God, not their own opinion.

God uses His gifted leaders to direct His church. Just as a church needs godly leaders, it also needs followers to imitate those who **follow** Jesus closely. Paul told his readers in...

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Equipping was a word used for setting broken bones or mending nets. Spiritual leaders are given for the equipping of the Saints so they will **use** their **gifts** to build up (*edify*) the body.

The reason it is so important to keep the Biblical order of authority is that God has placed each part of the body where they are, in order to maintain order and unity within the Church.

II. Unity is the result of maturity.

Read *Ephesians 4:13-16*

God wants His children to grow up in all things concerning Him, and the way to accomplish that is through His power and love given to us by His Spirit.

When the Church is growing and maturing, there is evidence.

1. The first evidence of maturity is Christlikeness.

A Christ-like person has qualities like Jesus. Being Christ-like is the result of surrender to God with a total self-dedication.

Becoming more Christ-like comes from knowing we have been freed from sin and then living within our new identity.

Like a newborn baby, when we are first saved, we did not have the wisdom or knowledge that comes with maturity.

2 Peter 3:18, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2. The second evidence of maturity is stability.

Immature believers constantly fall for false doctrine, but mature Christians are not tossed around by every religious novelty.

There are religious quacks waiting to kidnap God's children and get them into their false cults. But the maturing believer recognizes false doctrine and stays clear of it.

3. The third evidence of maturity is truth combined with love. “*Speaking the truth in love*” Eph. 4:15

It has been said that truth without love is brutality but love without truth is hypocrisy.

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. NKJV

Some people think it is good to refrain from telling others the truth in order to keep the peace.

But if you truly love someone, you will be honest with them and want to warn them about upcoming destruction. We have to speak the truth to those around us, but always with love.

Truth is an unchanging attribute of God and truth is absolute and unchangeable. Jesus said in ***John 17:17, Your word is truth.***

Receiving truth is what allows us to come to a place of freedom, and the Lord has set up the body in such a way that we are to build up one another by speaking truth in love.

Speaking before you think is a bad habit that can get you into trouble and hurt you in the most important areas of your life.

Speaking out of turn can cause relationships to suffer or end, your career can be stalled at a level far below your talents, and most importantly, you may have little confidence in yourself.

4. The fourth evidence of maturity is cooperation.

Re-read *Ephesians 4:16*

Wiersbe said, “*Each believer, no matter how insignificant he may appear, has a ministry to other believers.*”

The body grows as the individual members grow, and they grow as they feed on the Word and minister to each other.

“An **isolated** Christian cannot minister to others, nor can others minister to him, and it is impossible for the gifts to be ministered either way.” (Wiersbe)

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Hebrews 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. NKJV

Maturity is seen in a church when all the parts of Christ’s body the church are all doing their job, which is ***effective working***. Every part of the body does its part in a coordinated effort.

Spiritual unity is not something we can manufacture. Spiritual unity is something we already have in Christ, and we must protect and maintain it. Truth unites but lies divide.

As Christians, we are not to do these things as a responsibility, rather we **get to** serve from love, as Children of God.

We are to do all of these things as a love response to what the Lord has already done for us as *2 Corinthians 5:14* says, ***“For the love of Christ compels us” NKJV***

We are to respond to the Lord in love, in light of all we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for all He has done.

He willingly shed His blood on Calvary for our Salvation and rose on the third day to prove He overcame death and sin.

In light of those facts, we are called as one body where Jesus Christ is the Head. So, love unites, but selfishness divides.

The Apostle Paul also spoke about church leadership when he addressed the Ephesian Elders, so, **please turn to *Acts 20***.

The church at Ephesus had a very rich history and a very distinguished list of former pastors as well.

The Apostle Paul served Ephesus as pastor for three years.

Timothy served Ephesus as pastor for a while and the Apostle John was also a pastor there at Ephesus as well.

Paul summoned the Elders of the church to come meet him on the beach for the first ever Pastor’s Conference with these men.

III. Paul’s Lifestyle in Ephesus.

Read *Acts 20:17-21*

Paul was a faithful servant and witness for Jesus Christ so, he pulled no punches and didn't sugar coat the Gospel message, teaching the full council of God's Word, even during opposition.

Paul was also **victorious** over temptations of the flesh.

- He fought laziness that can happen during attacks.
- He overcame pride with humility.
- He overcame discouragement and focused on his call.
- Paul didn't give into the fear of man, when intimidated.

Paul was able to do all these things through Christ who gave him strength. Our lifestyle is the best, and sometimes the only tool we have to witness for Jesus.

As Christians, we are never going to be perfect but we can be victorious over temptations of the flesh with Christ's strength!

Paul said, *"I suffered tears and trials by the plotting of my enemies."* There are people who actually plot things out against a ministry, and they are simply evil and serving the enemy!

Paul also said, *"I held nothing back that was helpful to you. I gave you 110% and then some within my life and the ministry."*

And what was his message... ***Acts 20:21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. NKJV***

At the end of your time here on planet earth, the only thing that will matter, is knowing **Jesus** and having faith in Him.

Paul knew this truth, and he was faithful to the Ephesian church.

IV. Paul followed the Lord's leading.

Read *Acts 20:22-27*

What does Paul mean by the statement, "I go bound"?

Paul was a willing slave unto of the Lord and he was bound by the direction of the Spirit with shackles of **obedience** and **love**.

Paul was going to go with obedience to the Lord, even though the only certainty he had was that trials and chains were awaiting him. That's called devotion and trust.

In *Acts 20:24*, Paul said, *"I am not moved or shaken by the thought of trials because I don't count this life as dear to me.*

Instead, I want to finish the race God has set before me."

Paul's focus was not on himself, rather he was willing to go where the Lord said to go as He showed Paul the next step.

To experience the abundant Christian life of joy in tribulations, we allow the Holy Spirit to move us. Not our past accomplishments, failures, potential future, or even retirement.

Like Paul would say, *"None of these things move me."*

V. The warning to the Overseers of the church.

Read *Acts 20:28-31*

1. Take heed to yourselves.

The first thing a spiritual overseer needs to do is to **cultivate** and grow in their own relationship with the Lord.

I have taught over and over again; you cannot feed from an empty cart. If you have not been regularly feeding from God's Word, you cannot properly serve those under you spiritually.

We should not lead out of the flesh, and you cannot be a good leader until you first learn to be a good follower.

Godly advice doesn't come from the flesh. We all have the capability of developing spiritual blind spots serving Christ.

Paul said in *2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. NKJV*

That seems to communicate we can be self-deceived. *How do we discern the areas of our lives that are not pleasing unto the Lord?*

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

Psalm 139:24 And see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. NKJV

- a. **Seek God** and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the areas of your life that are not pleasing to Him.

Be careful seeking the Lord, because if truly seek Him and He reveals things to you, and you do not act upon His guidance and harden your heart, it will not go well for you.

b. Study the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. NKJV

To prevent our hearts and minds from deceiving us, we must be in the Word of God because it “*is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*”

I don't know how any follower of Jesus can get by without being fed by His words of love, correction, and grace.

c. Prayer.

Have a two-way conversation with the Lord. (2 ears, 1 mouth)

d. Through circumstances.

God allows trials and circumstances in our lives to accomplish His good pleasure.

Nothing that happens to a child of God is by mere chance.

God has a plan, and He is on the **throne** working it all out for your good and His Glory!

2. Be aware for the flock, God has made you an overseer.

We all must work on the health of the church, to maintain the unity because it is Christ's body. Every church faces spiritual attacks that seek to destroy it, so leaders must be aware.

We have an enemy who hates us and our God. Spiritual attacks can come by our neglecting our call, allowing false doctrine, or allowing power hungry people to push their weight around.

Notice in *verses 29-30*; Paul says some attacks come from within our congregation as well as the outside.

Savage wolves will come in...so take heed; notice, be aware!

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Matthew 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. NKJV

To recognize a wolf, look at their life, their relationships, and how many people they are influencing for the kingdom.

3. Protect the flock through correct teaching and prayer.

Paul truly had a heart for the Ephesian believers.

4. Be on guard against a financial attack.

There are two warnings. First for the leaders, don't fleece the sheep and don't take advantage of God's money or His people.

But also, there are people, as a way of showing disapproval of a church, refuse to give of their time, talents, or treasure.

VI. Practical Application

God uses the church to bring out the best in His children as we grow and minister with each other. The Lord's plan is to make us more like Christ as we grow in His grace and knowledge.

In Christ's body the Church, every member is a minister, and the Lord has gifted each person with certain gifts. The Church is a participation activity, not a spectator event.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NKJV

The Lord specifically made you for a pre-assigned task, our conversion is not the end of the story, it is the beginning. We are a part of God's "*new creation*".

- We are victorious when we surrender to the Holy Spirit.
- We all need to keep the cross the main focus.
- We need to be in constant communication with the Lord.
- The body of Christ needs to be on guard against attacks.

The Ephesian church did not heed this message. 35 years later, this church was ruined. The Lord sent this church a message.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent. NKJV

Like any family or organization, there are always potential dangers and predators lurking. Good leaders need to always be aware of potential threats to the family or organization.

On Sunday afternoons, beginning in February there will be some new leaders' information meetings. As we continue to grow, we need leaders who love Jesus and want to serve Him here.

I am asking you to pray and ask the Lord if He wants you to have any sort of leadership position within this fellowship.

As we close, allow me to give the dictionary definition of some of the qualities, good leaders within the Church, should possess.

This is not an exhaustive list, and before I list these characteristics, you need to hear this. Just like the Biblical qualifications for an Elder, no one can keep these perfectly.

If anyone could be perfect, then Christ died in vain. The object of hearing these characteristics is to give us a guideline.

We can only live godly by surrendering and allowing the Holy Spirit to have control of our lives.

Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. NKJV

1. **Love** is the most important characteristic of a godly leader.

Not necessarily mushy but they possess Christ's love for others.

2. **Integrity**, which is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.

3. A godly leader needs **empathy**, which is the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.
4. A godly leader is **accountable**, and someone who takes responsibility for what they do and gives a satisfactory reason for it to others.
5. A godly leader shows **humility**, which is a Biblical and modest view of one's own importance.
6. A godly leader **inspires** others to grow up in Christ, while recognizing their own fallibility.
7. A godly leader has good **communication** and decision-making skills.

A godly leader will say what they are planning on doing, and they do what they say they are going to do.

8. A godly leader must possess **positivity**.

Even if you gravitate towards negativity, you must allow the Holy Spirit to teach you to meditate on praiseworthy things.

9. A godly leader must be a good **listener** and be able to control their tongue.
10. A godly leader must learn how to **delegate** to others and duplicate themselves.
11. Godly leaders are always **learning** and praying.
12. Godly leaders are **passionate** about the things of the Kingdom, more than things of the earth.

Those who truly know the Lord, love the Lord. And His love compels us to serve Him.