

We Lead

Hebrews 13:7-17

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 5, 2020

This morning, we come to our first Sunday in the New Year. This is our first worship service in 2020. And in honour of that, I'd like to talk about our vision statement. To get us ready for this year and all it's going to bring, I'd like to talk about where we're heading as a church and where we'd like to go by looking at this statement. It's up here on the board.

As some of you will remember, when I was at Grace Advance Academy a couple of years ago, they asked us to write a vision statement for our church that talked about where we were going, what we were trying to do as a congregation. And the opening paragraph that we wrote said this - it said:

It is our vision is to proclaim "grace upon grace" to Chilliwack, British Columbia and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17 says, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

The next paragraph says:

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack (GFC), we believe that salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives, and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus earns the Father's approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. Since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace in several ways.

And they're up here on the screen as well. I've got them listed for you. They're also in a handout that you have in your bulletin as well if you wanted to look at them there.

But here's some ways that we proclaim grace as a church; we proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. We do it through worship. We proclaim it through evangelism and service, through counseling and leadership. And then finally, the last point here says we proclaim grace upon grace through equipping the saints.

If you would like to learn more about that, all those points are on our website. You can read about them there. We've got an explanation of each of them in full. There's also a pamphlet on the table outside in the lobby as well. But this is our vision statement as a church, this is what we are trying to do. We want to proclaim God's grace to people. We want to tell them that salvation is all of God and it's not of us.

I've talked with several pastors recently about the biggest problem facing the church today, about the biggest issue that we face. And they've all said that it's our deficient view of God. The biggest issue we face as a church worldwide is that we think so little of Him. And we go around saying, "Woe is me, how am I going to do this? How am I going to face another year," when all along God is right there waiting to help. When all along the Lord is right there waiting to save us and sanctify us and be of use to us if we would just call out on Him. And that's what we want to address as a church. We want to fix our deficient view of God.

I was in one of those conversations, I had a pastor tell me, he said, "You know the difference between a church and a country club? God builds the church. God is the only one who can take credit for this." And that's our vision as a church. That's what we want to see. We want to see God build His church among us. We want to see something that He alone can take credit for. I want to see a ministry that 20 years down the road, 30, 40 years down the road, we look back and say, "I can't explain this, it was all of God." We can't take any credit for this. And to do this, we want to proclaim His grace to people. We want to tell them about Him.

And this morning, we're going to talk about how we're going to do that through the ministry of leadership. That's the next point in our Vision Statement. The first five points up here, we've actually gone over in previous Sundays, in previous years. You can listen to those online if you like. We have a whole vision statement section on our website with sermons on there. But the sixth one says this – it says:

We proclaim grace upon grace through leadership. Because leaders are a gracious gift to the church, it is our vision that we follow their loving counsel and guidance. God's grace gives us qualified servants to "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Peter 5:2). The Lord provides men who are "above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money" to serve and guide His people (1 Timothy 3:1-7). It is our job as members to follow them and make their work a joy and not a burden (Hebrews 13:17). We want to acknowledge God's grace in their lives and to respond to them in a God-honouring way.

Just to say a few words about this paragraph, but I think we all understand that one mark of a healthy church is strong leadership, right? It just makes sense. One indication that God is building the church is that you have good leaders there. God's not going to bless a church with bad leaders. He's not going to build a church with the wrong men in place. He's only going to do it through the right ones.

And we said quite a bit about this before. I don't want to repeat anything here. If you remember, we did a series on the book of Titus when we were installing our first elders, and we talked about what an elder is and what an elder does. We did the same thing for the office of deacon as well. We did a short series on deacons, and I won't repeat that here. But what I want to do this morning is to talk about the first sentence in that paragraph where it says, "Because leaders are a gracious gift to the church, it is our vision that we follow their loving counsel and guidance."

If you notice, there's two parts to that statement. The first is that "Because leaders are a gift" and the next is that "It is our vision that we follow them." In other words, you have to first see your leaders as a gift. You have to first see them as coming from God and then you can follow. Those two things go together. You can't follow your leaders if you see them as a curse or something like that. You have to see them as God's gift to you.

We've all seen churches split for this reason. We've seen them split because they don't see their leadership as a gift. It's been said, churches split over the colour of the carpet, but that's really not true. They split over the people selecting the colour of the carpet. That's why they split. Nobody's that passionate about green or red carpet.

Let's put it another way, the church is a volunteer organization, right? If you think about it, nobody gets paid to be here. You come because you want to, you come because it's your choice and you see God using it to bless your life, and you follow your leaders for the same reason. And this is what we're going to talk about this morning. We want to build this up in you. We want you to see church as a joy and not a burden. We want our leaders to be a gift to you.

The story is told of a little girl who was standing up on the pew before church and dancing and singing and playing, until her mother pulled her down and swatted her hand. At which point the child started to cry and the mother said, "That's better, you need to remember you're in church."

And I think we'd all agree there's some truth in that. You need to be serious when you come here. You need to be reverent in church. But at the same time, you need to see this as a joy, amen? You need to see the church as a gift and a privilege from God, and we need to see our leadership the same way.

Which is what I want to talk to you about this morning, and I want to do it by looking at a passage that we haven't studied before on Sunday mornings. This is a new passage to us, but it's Hebrews chapter 13. So if you would, turn there with me in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 13.

And as you're turning there, Hebrews 13 may be familiar to you because it's known by some as the submission chapter. And what I mean, it's often used by leaders to teach their people to submit. Because Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account."

And it is a good passage for that. It does teach us about submission, but it teaches us about something else as well. Because before the author ever gets to that, he talks about leadership. Before he ever talks about how you should follow your leaders in the church, he gives us a whole section on how leaders should lead you.

This is always the pattern in Scripture by the way. This is always the way you see things in the New Testament. You always read about the leaders first before you read about those who follow. You read about their conduct first because they set the standard. There's a high calling

for them. You don't just read that you're supposed to submit to your leaders. You read about what the leaders are to act like first, and then you get into submission.

And with that said, if you want to read this section - Chris read the whole passage. Let me just read two verses to you. I'll talk about the middle section in a moment. But if you look in Hebrews 13:7, I want to read this passage to you. It says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

And then if you read down in verse 17, the author picks up his line of thought again, and he says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Just to give you a little background on this, the book of Hebrews has been called the most Christ-exalting book in the Bible. You could call it that because it was written to exalt Christ among the Jews. It was written to tell the Hebrew people how great their Saviour is. So the author spends a lot of time telling us how Jesus is greater than anything that came before in the Old Testament. He's greater than the sacrifices, He's greater than the temple, He's greater than the Levitical priesthood. And here at the end of the book, he says, "Jesus is greater than your leaders, whoever they may be. He's greater than any pastor or elder could ever be."

Because after mentioning leaders in verse 7, he says this in verse 8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." In other words, while earthly leaders come and go, Jesus doesn't. While earthly leaders live for a while and then die and leave us, Jesus remains the same. He never dies, He never leaves us. He's the greatest leader of all.

If you think about it, Israel had a lot of great leaders in the past. They've had a lot of great men who guided them. Men like Moses and Samuel and David. Those were some amazing guys – Solomon. But a time came when they all died. A time came when they all left this world and their leadership was over, and the author says, here, Jesus will never do that. Therefore, He's greater than them. And he gives us a long section in verses 9 through 16 explaining that before he goes back to his original argument. I'll talk about that in a moment.

But that's an important point to make here, it's a good place for us to begin this passage. Because I hear people say all the time, "I can't go to church because the people are so fake." You guys heard that before? Anybody heard that? Yeah, we all have. "I can't go because the leaders are all hypocrites." I've heard people say that to me and I'm like, "Well, I'm a believer."

The author of Hebrews says, "You shouldn't go to church for the leaders, ultimately. You shouldn't go for the people, ultimately, you go for Jesus Christ. You go to worship Him. He's greater than all of that. He supersedes everything." This is another thing you hear people say: "I can't go to church because Jesus leads an invisible church. I can't go to church because He leads a church you can't see." Well, that's true, but He leads it this way - He leads it through leaders that you can see. He leads His invisible church through visible people.

In fact, they are an extension of His ministry to you. They're an extension of Christ's love for your soul. So you can't just stay home, you need to be with the rest of us. Which is what we're going to talk about this morning. This morning, we're going to talk about the gift of leadership to the church. I think this is an important topic because if we're all honest about it, we've all seen leaders that were not a gift, right? We've all seen leaders that blew it, everybody. And even if you haven't seen one, you've read about them in the news or online. It seems like every couple of months there's a new scandal in the Christian world.

But the Bible says leadership was never supposed to be that way. It was never supposed to be a curse to the church – it was supposed to be a gift. And we want to return to that this morning. We want to talk about the blessing of leadership. That's the next part of our Vision Statement. With that in mind, but this is what we want to see happen in the New Year. We want your leaders to be a blessing to you and a joy.

As you know, we ordained our first elders here at GFC about six months ago, so they're very new. We haven't had them that long and we plan on bringing on our first deacons soon as well. I'll say more about that in a moment, but we would like to expand the leadership team to include deacons as well.

But I mention that to tell you that our goal in all of this is for these men to be a blessing to you. Our goal in all of this is for them to be a gift and a treasure from the Lord. These are good men as you know. They're men of high caliber, and so are the men who are pursuing deaconship. We want you to see them that way as well. And we're going to do that through the eyes of Scripture in Hebrews chapter 13, and talk about this.

So, if you're taking notes this morning, in Hebrews 13:7, I want you to see four ways that your leaders are a gift to you. That's our outline for today, that's what's what we're talking about; four ways that your leaders are a gift. And just to let you know on the front end of this, I tried really hard to make this come off the right way because if I'm not careful, it can come off the wrong way as if it's a complaint, as if I don't think you're doing this.

I want to be clear on the front end here, I think you guys do a wonderful job following your leaders here at Grace Fellowship Church. I really mean that. You guys do an excellent job of this passage. I saw your lives in here as I was studying this this week. I don't have a Sunday morning when I don't go home blessed by you. I've talked to pastors that dread coming to church. They dread getting out of bed on a Sunday morning. I don't feel that way. I love being here with you. So this is not a complaint. This is just an exhortation and encouragement to just keep on keeping on, keep doing what you're doing. Excel still more.

I also want to say on the front end that we don't know who the audience was for this passage, and so this could be applied to the universal church. It could be implied to the church all across the world. So we're going to talk about it this way this morning.

But with that said, let me give you four ways your leaders are a gift to you. The first one is that they lead you. That sounds pretty simple, but that's what we read right here. That's what the text says. The first way your leaders are a gift is that they lead you, which means they

take you somewhere. That's what a leader does. He finds you in one place and he takes you to another. He finds you at one stage in your Christian journey, in your life's journey, and he helps you further down the road. If you're in the same place now that you were five years ago, then the person didn't lead you. Leaders get you further down the road.

And if you read in verse 7, this is how the passage begins when it says, "Remember those who lead you." Just to say a few words about this, I've told you before that this is part of the closing verses to the book of Hebrews. This is how the author sums it up. Because after talking about the excellency of Christ and the superiority of Christ, he says, Jesus is greater than everything. He's greater than all earthly leaders. But he says it in a positive light. If you notice how he says this, he doesn't put leadership down. He says, "Remember those who lead you."

From which we get the word "pneumonic." It refers to something that impacts the memory. In the verb form, it means to call something to mind, think about it, dwell on it, meditate on it. The author says you should do that with your leaders, with those who lead you - call into mind, think about them.

And if you notice, this is interesting because it's in the past tense in English, to signify that this is referring to your past and present leaders. This is referring to anyone who's helped you along the way. Maybe those who are helping you now, maybe those who helped you in the past. Which would have been significant to the original audience because you didn't have leaders for too long in the ancient world because they died quickly. It was a job with a short shelf life because the church was under persecution. Many of the leaders were killed for their faith.

We don't have this issue today. Church is at peace with the government for the most part. But in the first century, it was very common for the authorities to break into your house in the middle of the night, come into your church on a Sunday morning and haul you off to jail. And the first ones they would take would be the leaders because of what they represented. Take the shepherds away and the sheep scatter. These guys had a target on their back. They didn't live for too long.

So the author here puts this in the past tense to say, "Remember those who lead you. (It's a sobering thing. Remember those who died for you who are no longer with us, because they died for you.)" That's what he says. "They paid the ultimate price for you."

As I was studying this, I was trying to think how to apply this to our lives today because no one's broken into my home in the middle of the night, hauled me away. But I think we can relate to it this way - we've all been helped by someone, haven't we? We've all been ministered to by some leader, past or present, who's not around anymore.

I mean, for most of you, this is not the first church you've attended. For most of you, this is not the first place where you've worshiped. Someone led you before us. Someone ministered to your soul, and the author says you need to remember them as well. Even if they're still alive, you need to cherish them and hold them in high esteem.

When I meet new people in our church, if I have a chance to sit down and talk to them, one thing I've started to ask them is, "Tell me about some men who impacted your life for Christ. Tell me about some leaders who have blessed you" because I know they didn't just end up this way. They didn't just fall from the sky and become a Christian. Somebody led them, somebody disciplined them before I got here, and I want to hear about that man or that woman. Many of our ladies were blessed by other ladies in the church.

Do the same thing when you meet people from other churches. You sit down and ask them the same thing because they didn't just end up that way. This is how the church works, this is how God builds it - by sending leaders to us. And this passage says they are His gift. Don't forget them because they are His blessing to you. God sent them. If you've learned more Bible from someone, God sent that person to you. The devil didn't do that. So thank Him for that.

On the leadership side of things, this means our leaders should remember this as well. Our pastors and elders and deacons should work hard to be a blessing to people. I think one of the greatest weaknesses in modern church leadership is we don't do anything worth remembering anymore.

Adrian Rogers said, "The biggest problem with preachers today is nobody wants to kill them anymore." We shouldn't go through the motions, we shouldn't be lazy. Leaders should work hard at making an impact in people's lives. That's one way we bless our people.

For a personal example of this, I was saved at 17 and the first person to disciple me was a young man named Joe Eccles. He was the youth minister at my church. It was his first full time job in the ministry. He didn't have a lot of experience. He didn't have a lot of training, but his door was always open to me. He was always available. And so I would come by there night after night and ask Joe questions about the Bible, every night of the week. He would open his Bible and tell me what he knew. In fact, I was over at his house so much his wife started calling me "son" because she said she had to feed me like a son - "Don't you have food at home?"

And listen, you guys will never know the name Joe Eccles. Never wrote a book, never had a worldwide ministry, never preached in front of thousands of people, but he helped change my life for eternity. And this passage says, I need to remember people like that. You need to remember the men who have made an impact in your life that way as well and see them as God's gift.

Let me say it this way (this is important), some of you have come to us from other churches. You've left your former place of worship to be part of this one, and you're welcome here. We're so glad to have you. But I want to encourage you to always speak highly of the place you left. As far as it depends on you, as far as you can, always speak highly of your former leaders, because that's what this text says. Build them up and don't tear them down if it's possible for you. They're God's gift to you. They're His blessing in your life.

Martin Lloyd Jones said, “The most urgent need in the church today is leaders. We need men of God to stand up and speak the truth. It is the greatest need in the church today, it's the greatest need in the world also, and it's a blessing when you find them.”

Which leads to the next point in our passage, the next way your leaders are a gift to you. The first is because they lead you, which means they took you somewhere. They find you in one place in the journey and take you to another.

Second reason is this, the second way your leaders are a gift, is because they speak the Word of God to you. They speak the Word of God to you, which means they don't just lead you anywhere, they lead you to Scripture. They lead you to the Bible. If you read in verse 7, it says, “Remember those who lead you, who spoke the Word of God to you.”

The author says, “Don't just remember any leader. It's okay to do that, but particularly, remember those who taught you the word of God.” I think we all understand you didn't just learn the Bible by reading it cover to cover. Somebody walked you by the hand and showed you what it says. Somebody explained it to you. You need to remember them.

This phrase, “word of God,” it's a familiar one in the book of Hebrews, it's used several times. For instance, it's used in Hebrews 4:12 to say, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

The idea there is that the Word of God is alive. It's living and active, and you should remember the men who taught it to you. That passage reminds me of what Martin Luther said. Martin Luther said, “Preach in such a way that the people will either hate their sin or they're going to hate you.” And the Word of God, you guys have read the Bible before and said, “That's me. It's talking about me.” And you've had to put it down because it got too personal, right? That's what the Word of God is. It's a personal book.

Another verse that talks about the Word of God in Hebrews is chapter 11:1-3, which says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God.”

So now the author shifts gears a little bit and he says, “The worlds were prepared by God's word. They were created by His word.” God didn't snap His fingers to create the world. He didn't use His muscles, He used his voice. And tying this into our passage here in Hebrews 13, the author now says, “This is another reason why your leaders are a gift. This is why they are a blessing - because they speak this word to you. They speak a word that has the same power. The same power that prepared the world comes out of their mouth when they teach the Scriptures. The same power that is living and active and cuts you like a sword comes to you through them because they teach you this book.”

The phrase “speak the word of God,” it means they said it out loud. They read it out loud and they teach it to you out loud. That's their job, that's their calling. They don't tell you the latest in the news or world events because there's no power in that. They don't tell you about the

latest movie they saw or the latest ballgame because that doesn't cut you like a sword. You can turn that off. You can't turn this off. They teach you the Bible.

Another way to say this, is it's not a leader's job to bring people to church. It's his job to bring people to God. It's not his job to fill the pews every Sunday through whatever means necessary, it's his job to fill the pulpit with Scripture. If he's doing that, he's succeeding no matter what the world may say. If he's doing that, he's a blessing to you. And you need to remember that.

I mention this because I think there's a great misunderstanding today in the church. I think there's a lot of confusion on this, because it's so easy, especially in a town like Chilliwack which is full of churches, to look around the corner or to look down the street and to see another church getting bigger, overflowing each week, lots of ministries, and to say, "We're failing because we're not doing that." It can be so easy to get caught up in the numbers game, to drive by the parking lot and count the numbers of cars in the church.

Don't look at me like that, you guys have done that. I've done that before. It's a temptation to say, "God only blesses the biggest and we're not the biggest. God only helps the strongest and we're not the strongest." This text says you shouldn't do that. Don't give up if you're teaching the Bible. You're not failing if your leaders are giving you the Word of God.

Listen, friends, a lot of churches are growing today for the wrong reasons. A lot of churches are growing today because they're doing things that God does not approve of. I think I've told you before, the fastest growing church in America is led by a man who says that God wants to give you your best life now and give you a life of prosperity. That's the fastest growing church in the United States. God doesn't build a church that teaches things like that. He only wants to build a church that teaches His Word, which is why we take this so seriously here.

If you remember, this is why we put so much work in training up our first elders over the summer. We got them reading and studying and doing tests to make sure they could speak the Word of God to you before they run office. We did it to make sure they could teach you the Bible so they can be a blessing to you, and we take this very seriously here; which leads us to another way your leaders are a gift. They're a gift because they led you and spoke the Word of God to you. That's what the passage says here. They tell you what it says.

But not only that, a third way your leaders are a gift, is that they live a godly life. That's the next point in our passage for this morning. A third way your leaders are a gift is if they live a godly life for you. Which means that not only do they teach the Bible, but they live it out in their lives. Not only do they speak the Word of God to you with their lips, but they demonstrate it with who they are.

If you read on in verse 7, it says, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." If you notice, this is the second time the author gives us a command in this passage. This is the second time he expects us to do something in this verse.

He starts off by telling us to remember those who lead you, keep them in mind. But now, he takes it one step further and he says, “Imitate their faith.” He actually makes it a little more serious in that because he says, “Considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.” In other words, this is to be a thoughtful imitation. This is to be a meaningful act for you. God is not pleased when you mindlessly follow your leaders. God is not pleased when you say, “I believe this because pastor so-and-so says it. I am who he is. He thinks for me.” God doesn't want that. He wants you to think for yourself, consider the result of their conduct and then imitate it if it pleases Him.

In Greek it means “conduct” or “behavior,” but the English Standard Version has a good translation – “Way of life” here. It means you should consider their way of life. You should consider what they do day in and day out.

As you know, the Christian life is not just lived on Sundays. It's lived all throughout the week. It's not just something you do when you're here with us as a church. It's something you do when you leave this place. And the author says, “You need to see leaders when you leave this place as well and observe them. And if their life is biblical and it pleases God, you need to imitate it.”

There's an element of discernment in this. There's an element of wisdom. Even though he says this in the most positive way imaginable, the author is saying that all leaders aren't godly leaders. So you need to have discernment when you follow leadership.

I did some research on this this week and the number one reason why pastors leave the ministry is burnout. The number one reason they quit is because they're tired of the work. But the second reason is moral failure. They sin in some terrible way. It's not as common as you might think the way some make it sound. That you think every pastor does that - that's not true. But it is more common than we would like to admit.

Several years ago, Leadership Magazine took a poll of a thousand pastors and found that 12% of them had committed adultery while in the ministry. 12%, and 23% did something they felt was inappropriate. And this is why this is important. This is why you got to hear what this text is saying because it says you can't mindlessly follow people. As great as they may be, as wonderful as they may seem, you can't mindlessly copy what they do. You have to consider their conduct first. There are tares among the wheat, there are wolves in the sheep pen, so you need to do this thoughtfully.

I need to also add, you shouldn't be suspicious of your leaders either. It's a balance in this. You shouldn't put them under a microscope and be their judge, jury, and executioner. But you should think about what you see in their lives, and if it's good, imitate it because this is God's gift to you as well. This is His blessing, to have men that you can imitate.

I think if we were all honest about it and we thought about this for a moment, we'd have to say that the most important things we've learned in life were not learned in school or at work. They were learned in church. I mean, if you think about it, your parenting, your marriage, your character, the way you treat people, the way you respond to conflict, the man you are,

the woman you are - you learned in a place like this. Some of you were fortunate enough to have godly parents and you learned them there. But for others, the church taught you that.

This is God's gift in your life. This place is His blessing to you. Someone showed you their way of life, someone lets you into their home, lets you into their personal business, and it changed you forever. They let you consider their conduct and you need to be thankful and grateful for it, and you need to do the same for others. You need to have them into your home as well to do the same.

Now, Leonard Ravenhill, the evangelist said that, "A true shepherd leads the way, he does not merely point the way." And that's what this says as well.

Which leads us to one more point to consider this morning. It leads to one more way your leaders are a gift to you. Just to review these other ones, firstly, the author of Hebrew says your leaders are a gift because they lead you. They find you in one place and take you to another.

The second, he says they're a gift because they speak the Word of God to you. They don't just talk about the news, talk about world events. They teach the Scriptures to you. That's why they're in leadership. Third way they're a gift is that they live a godly life. They live the Scriptures out for you so you can imitate their way of life.

It brings us to a final point to consider this morning, a fourth way your leaders are a gift to you. And with this one, I want to go back to our Vision Statement for a few minutes. But the final way is this - your leaders are a gift to you because ultimately at the end of the day, they point you to Christ. Remember, this is what the book of Hebrews is all about. This is the theme of it, the superiority of Christ. And so the author closes the section out by saying, "Your leaders are our gift because they point you to Jesus Christ. They draw your focus toward Him."

If you read all of the passage, it says, "Remember those who lead you, who spoke the word of God to you and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

I told you before that the theme of Hebrews is Christ. This was written to exalt Christ among the Jews. And you see that here because even at the end of the book, the author can't say enough about Him. Even as he's wrapping it up, (he's into his 13th chapter), he still can't get Jesus off his mind. He's called Jesus the great high priest, he's referred to Him as the temple and things like that.

But even here at the end, he has to go back to the same subject. Because he mentions Him one more time to say, "Your leaders should point you to Him. If they're doing their job, if they're living up to all these other things in the list, then they will acknowledge His greatness because Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever."

And the rest of this passage is just an explanation of that. The rest of it is just a reiteration of that theme. Chris read this to you a moment ago - I won't read it for the sake of time. But

verse 10, he says that we have an altar greater than the one Israel had because Jesus is our altar. He died for our sins once and for all. It's been said that He is the priest and the altar.

And verse 12, it says, Jesus suffered outside the gate for you, which means He was your sin bearer. He took your sins out to the cross and died for them there, so you wouldn't have to. Verse 14, it says that Jesus will bring you to the city which is to come, which is a reference to heaven. The Lord will take you to heaven. And then down in verse 17, it says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them," which brings us back to what he says in verse 7.

This takes us back to where we started this whole thing. Why should you obey your leaders? Because they point you to Christ. Why should you submit to them? Because they teach you about Him. This is the greatest thing they can do for you, this is the greatest blessing in the list - your leaders point you to Jesus.

You know, in his commentary on Hebrews, William Barclay tells a story of a man who came to Christ at a young age because of a sermon he heard, because of a Gospel message. And when he was asked who the preacher was, who gave the sermon, the man said, "I don't know. I can't remember. All I remember is what he said about Christ."

Friends, I want to tell you that's a true leader. That is a test of a true man of God. You forget him, you remember Christ. You don't know his name, you may not remember, but you remember the Saviour. I've met people who've gotten saved and they remember the preacher's name, the church's name, but they haven't told me one thing about Christ. You want it to be the opposite of that. Remember Him.

When it's all said and done, can you remember what they said about Him? Can you remember what they taught you about Him? If you can, that man was God's gift to you. If you can, he was a blessing. True leaders exalt Christ. That's what they do. True pastors and elders and deacons make much of Him. They may be good speakers or bad speakers, they may have good personalities or bad ones, they may be pleasant to be around, they may be unpleasant to be around in some ways. None of that matters as much as this - what they told you about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And all this leads us back to where we started this morning, it leads us back to our Vision Statement. Because if you remember, the statement starts out by saying, "It is our vision to proclaim grace upon grace to Chilliwack, British Columbia until the ends of the earth," which means it is our vision to lead you to Christ. It's our vision to make much of Him. We want to be forgotten so He can be remembered. We want to move to the side so He can stand out in front.

In fact, I think I speak for our elders when I say that we want to grow in each of these areas that we talked about this morning. We want to get better in all of these things so we can be a blessing to you, so we can be a joy for you to follow.

So for instance, just to tell you some of the ways we're going to try to grow in this in the New Year, some of the ways we want to get better at this - in the area of speaking the Word of God to you, if you just look at the calendars that are in your bulletins (we put a calendar on

the back here for you of events that are coming up in 2020) - but you'll see that a lot of these events are centered around speaking the Word of God to you. They're centered around teaching the Scriptures.

This is something we've always done at Grace Fellowship Church. We've always been focused on teaching the Bible, but it's intentional that the calendar is set up this way. Because for instance, on February 1st, one of the ways we're teaching the Word of God to you, we're starting up the Iron Man's Bible Study again. This is a study that's designed to take you through the Scriptures one book at a time.

We meet on Saturday mornings and the job for the men, the assignment is to read the book of the Bible that we're going to talk about that morning. So we're starting on 2 Kings. That's where we left off in the fall, and we're going to spend one week studying that and reading that. And then we're going to go to the next book, to the book of 1 Chronicles. We'll go all the way through the Bible till we get to the book of Isaiah.

I think there'll be a little bit of weeping and gnashing of teeth in 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles. Those are tough books, but they're wonderful books to study. We look forward to studying them together. But that's one way we want to do this to speak the Word of God to you.

Then our ladies are going to be doing the same thing with the Women of Grace studies. Those start up on January 14th, but our women are going to be doing the same thing that the men do. They're going to go through the book of Genesis verse by verse, chapter by chapter to understand what it says. We're going to do this at the Shepherd's Conference for those who can make it out there to California, teach the Word of God to you there. Do it at the spring conference in April with Stuart Scott. I'll tell you more about that conference. It's changed a little bit from what we originally planned.

We do this on Sunday mornings, but all this is to say this is one way we want to grow in this text. This is one way we want to apply what this passage says, by speaking the Word of God to you. We also want to get better at living our lives in front of you. This is a humbling one, but point 3 in the passage here talks about living a godly life, and this is one of those verses you say who is adequate for these things. But we want to give you an opportunity to be around us as a leadership team so you feel like you have access to us.

So one way we're going to do that is through our care groups that are starting up next week. If you're not in one of those small groups, next week, we're kicking off our care group ministry where we meet in each other's homes to talk about the sermon or things related to that. Each one of those is led by an elder or a leader from the church. So please plug into those if you can.

Also, this is something we're going to do different this year. If you notice on January 31st, we're starting up the "Coffee with the Cagles" event. This is where my wife and I invite people from the church over to our home. We have been doing that for new people and

guests, but I've realized throughout the years, I can't get to you all on a Sunday. I feel like I can't meet with you and see how you're doing and get involved in your lives.

And so, we're going to have everyone from the church over, not at the same time. Just to clarify that. We're going to divvy it up a little bit, but we've done this before as well. So for January 31st, everyone whose last name starts with the letters A through C are invited over to our home for a time of fellowship. And then in February, the last Friday night in February, everyone whose last name starts with the letters D, E and F are going to be invited over. And we're just going to go through the alphabet so we can have you all over. We really enjoy spending time with you and getting to know you. But this is one way we want to grow in this area.

And I could mention other ways as well. I know Kevin and Quinten do work very hard at getting together with you, spending time with you. But we want to grow in this, we want to be serious about taking these things seriously. As your leaders here at Grace Fellowship, we want to be a blessing to you. It's our joy to lead you, I can't say that enough. It's a blessing to stand up here in front of you, week after week and open the Word of God to you and pray to you. It's a joy to be here. We just want to return the joy, amen? We want you to feel the joy that we feel in being here. I know these men in leadership deeply love this church – they've told me that. They deeply love you. And we want to do all these things that we are called to do in Scripture in the New Year.

In one of his sermons, Charles Spurgeon who knew a lot about leadership, he was very gifted in that. He said this, he said:

Whenever anything is to be done, either in the church or in the world, you may depend upon it, it is done by a man whom God calls. The whole history of the church from the earliest ages teaches us the same lesson; when God wants something done, He raises up a man. He raises up a Moses or a Gideon or an Isaiah. He raises up a Peter or a Paul or a John. In other words, He raises up a leader.

And we want to see that here among us. It's part of our vision as a church. We want to see God raising up leaders among us. And please pray for us that the Lord will do that in the New Year. Pray for the church worldwide. If you see the church struggling, it's because leaders are struggling. Pray for the Lord to raise up leaders in the church worldwide and among us. Let's pray for that this morning.

Lord, we thank you for the high calling of leadership in the church. We thank you Lord, for the leaders that we read about in Scripture. We're reading these words in the book of Hebrews from a man we don't even know who he was. This was written by an anonymous author who was leading the people. Lord, thank you for those You've called to do this.

And I want to say a special prayer of thanks, Lord, for the congregation You've given us here at Grace Fellowship. These are wonderful people, and we want to just bless them the way they've blessed us. Thank you for Christ who is the greatest leader. Thank you for the sinless Son of God who came to be among us and to train 12 men to go out and change the world.

Would You help us to, Lord, see the same type of resolve, same type of men among us. And would You be glorified in the New Year Father as we seek to serve and to honour You most of all and point people to Christ. We pray this in His name, amen.