

Series: **The Original Church Planter**

Today's Title: "**Church Leadership**" – part 3

August 6, 2023 – Acts 20:28-31

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**Objective:** To encourage believers trust God and fully commit themselves to Christ and the mission He gave us.

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Teacher Appreciation – Next Gen Kids / BBOV / Donaldson

Baby Pics & Brian quotes:

Some quotes from Brian:

"This nurse is straight out of a movie she's incredible.  
She might pull this child out single-handedly."

"This is insane to watch. We are getting a speech similar to what  
I'd imagine they gave the soldiers at Normandy."

"Mom I'm sorry for ever being a rascal to you after you went  
through this. This is horrible."

*And... last but not least...*

"Man, Eve really got the short end of the stick in the eating of the  
apple incident.

This is absolutely horrific."

***Opening Prayer***

Most teachers see their job as a calling – a labor of love.

They want to help kids.

They want to give kids the blessing of an education – to read,  
write, learn math.

They want kids to learn history – to learn about the world – to learn social skills which are necessary throughout the rest of their life.

***There is some similarity with teachers and church leaders.***

Church leaders are called by God for the sake of others.

Church leadership – like teaching – is not about a position of power or authority or self-advancement and self-promotion.

It's about those we serve.

It's about the kids in the class.

It's about serving Christ – and His people – who make up the church.

It's about the purpose / mission we're called to fulfill.

Over the past few years, we've certainly seen some examples of teachers who are not serving the good of the students – but they're teaching to promote their agenda – to promote what they believe is the right way to think and live.

***I don't know what % of teachers this group represents.***

The sad reality is not only the harm this does to kids and the damage it wreaks on the teaching profession and the reputation of public schools in our society, but it also creates the idea / perception that all teachers – or a majority of teachers are in it for their own agenda – their own benefit.

***Well... we've seen the same thing in churches over the centuries.***

Pastors / church leaders who are in it for themselves – to promote their own brand – or their own agenda.

They view their position as a church leader as a position of power, authority, and influence – and they make demands of their congregation, and they make decisions based on **their** preferences and their desires.

***I don't know what % of church leaders this represents.***

The sad reality is not only the harm this inflicts on the congregation and the damage it wreaks on the Church and the reputation of Christianity in our society, but it also creates the idea / perception that all church leaders – or a majority of them - are in it for their own agenda – their own benefit.

In our passage today, Paul gives us 3 more vital truths / principles to know and practice regarding the church.

**Turn to Acts 20:28-31**

This is sermon #3 - of 3 sermons looking at Paul's instructions to church leaders – specifically the elders from the church in Ephesus.

Paul is giving these men some final – parting words – as this is likely the last time they will see each other in this life.

*Parting words are very important words.*

It you're not going to see someone again – you want to make sure whatever you say is meaningful – important – lasting.

You don't talk about the weather or a cool movie you saw.  
You talk about life-changing – or life-keeping things.  
You talk about important, weighty things that will sustain –  
and guide the other person – you want to have a lasting  
influence from the words you say.

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is doing here.

### **Read vs. 28-31**

Paul gives 3 very important points of guidance – principles  
of church leadership in these verses.

Now... don't hear me say '*church leadership*' and "*check out*"  
because you're not a church leader.

You may not be a church leader...you may never be a leader  
in the church.

But that doesn't mean this isn't important information for  
you to know.

1. These truths apply to all Christians – all who follow  
Christ.
2. Every Christian needs to know what God calls church  
leaders to do / to be – so you can:
  1. Properly judge your church leaders.
  2. You can pray more precisely for your leaders.
  3. You can help and encourage your church leaders to fulfill the  
obligations of their office.

**The primary functions of overseers.** vs. 28

There is so much information here.

It's amazing how much truth the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write in 1 short verse.

### **Read vs. 28**

There are 4 verbs in this verse – each of them is significant in what they communicate.

1. “pay careful attention” – this is a command in the Greek. It's in the emphatic position in the Greek – so this is a point Paul is stressing.

The word means to *‘pay attention, beware of, be cautious, devote yourself to’*

It's in the present tense – so the command is to do this continually – all the time.

Paul tells us to – “pay attention” to 2 ‘groups’.

**First** – “yourselves” – we need to watch our own life – we need to pay attention to our own spiritual walk – our obedience to God's Word. The most important part of spiritual leadership is the spiritual life of the leader!

**Second** – “to all the flock” – not just a few key people – but to each person in the church.

This is why I have open appointment slots throughout the week.

If you want to meet with me – just contact the office and they will schedule you into one of those open slots.

I – and the other pastors – we’re available to meet with you – not just a short list of people – but to anyone who needs to meet with a pastor.

Every day – church leaders are to pay attention / be aware of - ourselves – and “to all the flock”.

What are we to “pay attention” to?

Paul will answer that question as he continues.

**2. “to care for”** Some translations: “to shepherd” – This means to provide food and to nourish. This was one of the primary things a shepherd does for sheep – to lead them to a pasture for grazing – to make sure the sheep are getting the nourishment they need.

This term is obviously being used as a metaphor for the church leader teaching God’s Word – which is the spiritual food Christians need.

**3. “He obtained”** – Some translations: “He purchased”

This is a theological truth that reminds all church leaders that the sheep – the flock – the congregation – does not belong to the church leader.

They belong to Jesus – which He “...obtained (purchased) with His own blood.”

**The church belongs to Jesus.**

The church leader doesn't have the right to use the church as he wants.

We are stewards of what belongs to Christ – so we need to make sure we lead the church according to the wishes and commands of Christ!

**4.** The fourth verb highlights the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us it was the Holy Spirit who “...has made you overseers”. Whether it was due to a direct appointment by the Spirit – or by recognition of the church – leaders are placed into leadership through the work and guidance of the Spirit of God.

“overseers” is an important term in vs. 28.

The 4 verbs all relate to the primary duties of the *Episkopos* – the overseers – leaders.

Greek: Episkopos – English Episcopal / Episcopalian – the head or overseer of a church – the leader – with a focus on caring for the ‘flock’. The Episcopal Church / Church of England (Which came into existence about 1500 years later) uses this title – but they are not the same thing.

The Greek word Paul is using here points to the leaders in the local church – specifically the leaders in Ephesus.

**The Greek word ‘Episkopos’ is in the plural** – pointing to not 1 leader / overseer in the church but more than 1.

**That Paul uses the plural form of this word is important.**

This is one of the key principles of local church leadership – a plurality of elders / overseers.

There shouldn't be just 1 leader.

1 leader creates more potential for error and danger to the congregation.

A plurality of leaders helps protect from error and keep the flock from danger.

Sometimes, looking at the opposite of something helps us get a better focus or understanding on what we're talking about.

Let me show you a passage that helps us understand what God expects from overseers / shepherds.

**Ezekiel 34:1-10** – a negative example of shepherds / overseers who neglected the flock and fed and protected themselves – at the expense of the sheep.

**Church leaders protect the church.** vs. 29-30

Another key duty of shepherds was to protect the sheep from the many predators – like wolves - that like lamb chops!

There were also many dangers that sheep were known to wander into – which would be harmful / deadly to them – such as a swift running creek or river. If a sheep got wet – and their wool soaked up all that water – sheep can't swim with all that extra water weight.



They have a tendency while they're head is down and they're grazing away - to wander away from the flock and get lost.

So, the shepherd would protect the flock from predators who wanted to harm – and from dangerous situations.

### **Read vs. 29-30**

We see 2 types of enemies here – or 2 strategies enemies use to attack the church.

**1. vs. 29** - A direct assault – a violent attack – intending to destroy and harm. Their motive is not hidden – it is in full public view: Destruction.

This can be someone spreading lies and rumors with hopes of creating a scandal or to smear the reputation of a person or the entire church – or it can be violence – vandalism – anything done to discourage and destroy someone in the church.

**2. vs. 30** - An enemy who entices people in the church to walk away from the church – from Christ – from their family, etc.

“...men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them...”

This is more subtle – crafty – devious.

But the result is really the same – to separate believers from the church – from the Body of Christ.

Spiritual pride and arrogance are probably the 2 most dangerous attitudes a church can have in regard to these threats.

Think about this...

The church in Ephesus was a church planted by the Apostle Paul – he pastored the church in its first 2 ½ - 3 years.

Sometime after Paul, Timothy became the pastor to the church in Ephesus.

Timothy's work as the Ephesian's pastor was the reason he wrote 2 letters to Timothy – 1 & 2 Timothy – letters written to give spiritual leadership guidance from Paul to Timothy.

Here is a church – planted by Paul – pastored for about 2 ½ years by Paul – pastored for a time by Paul's protégé – Timothy.

And still... this church struggled with false teaching and enemies that attacked it!

**Revelation 2:4**

“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

They fell prey to the 2<sup>nd</sup> kind of enemy – the one who lured them away – slowly – until one day they found themselves far from God.

They found themselves far from the mission God gave them.

They had forgotten their love for Christ – their love for His saving grace – their love for His Word.

**Church leaders must love the flock God has given them. vs. 31**

### **Read vs. 31**

This is another verse loaded with verbs which tells us a great deal about how leaders demonstrate their love for the flock.

1. “be alert” – Lit. – stay awake!!! Figuratively, Paul is telling them to *‘be vigilant’*.

This is a command in the Greek (present imperative) –

This is something Paul modeled for them – and he uses his time with them as the example for them to follow.

2. “remembering” – This is in the present tense – so Paul wants them to keep on remembering.

This is not a 1-time sharing of memories.

He wants these elders to constantly remember – for the sake of a reminder / a template to copy – how Paul acted – what his practice was in their midst.

3. “I did not cease” – He wants them to remember 2 things – and the first one is that he never stopped “admonishing” them.

He never got lax in this duty.

He was watching them – getting to know them – so he could lead them better.

4. “to admonish” – This word means to *warn, counsel, exhort – to reason with them – correcting – encouraging.*

Paul says he did this to “everyone with tears”.

Notice in **vs. 28** – “all the flock”.

No favoritism.

No partiality.

“everyone” – “all” – nobody is to be left out!

“with tears night or day” indicates this was more than a function of leadership.

There was a relationship here – a genuine concern / caring for the people in the Ephesian church.

This was more than a job for Paul – it was a labor of love.

### ***Apply it...***

1. Church leadership is about caring for the flock (church) – which belongs to Jesus – He paid for it with His blood!

Leaders must care for the flock – they belong to Jesus – which means church leaders must “pay attention” to their own spiritual life in order to lead properly!

2. There must be a plurality of leadership in the local church.

Not 1 sole leader – but more than 1 leader is required.

3. Church leaders are called to protect the church – from both direct assaults and more subtle and devious enticements.

4. Love is the overriding mandate for leaders.

Not only for leaders – but for all who follow Christ!

Love must be our defining trait.

Love each other – as Christ has loved us – and gave Himself for us.

*Close in prayer*