

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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The Key to a Healthy Church

1 Peter 5:1-5

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Harris Creek, how we doing? Let's go, let's go! So we have an 11-year-old son, and like a lot of 11-year-olds, he enjoys playing video games. And I noticed that several months went by where, you know, he wasn't playing video games. And I thought, man, what happened? Did he just outgrow this? Is he just focused on, you know, reading the Bible these days? Is that what he's just, doubling down? Finally, this parenting thing is connected. We are killing it, you know?

And so, we go to Office Depot because we're getting this poster board thing for him for a class assignment. And he says, 'Hey, Dad, do you think they have a power cord for an Xbox?' And I'm like, 'What are you talking about? Why do you need a power cord for an Xbox?' He's like, 'Well, I can't find my power cord.' I said, 'Is that why you haven't been playing?' And he's like, 'Yeah, it doesn't work without a power cord.' You know, dude's brilliant. And I'm just like, 'But what happened to your power cord? Like, how did you lose it?' And he goes, 'I don't know, it just disappeared.'

And I'm like, 'Buddy, it didn't just disappear. Like, power cords don't just disappear.' And he's like, 'Well, maybe someone stole it.' I was like, 'Let me get this straight. Someone broke into our house, passed by the TVs and any other valuables, they got to your Xbox, and they're like, 'Just what I need, a power cord. I'm taking this with me.' And he's like, 'I don't know what happened. I don't know what happened.' But the reality is, right, he's got this thing, and in order for it to work, he has to have this component. And without that missing piece, it's rendered useless. It doesn't work, right?

And in the same way, there's something in the church that if it disappears, if it goes missing, the church will not work. To say it differently, one day the church could work really well. Everything works, leadership works, members work, people are serving, people are in life groups, they're getting after it, they're sharing the gospel, they're engaging the lost, they're equipping the saints. And if this thing goes missing, stops working. Anybody know what it is?

You come up with a lot of fill in the blank there. But from the text, what it is, humility. If you lose humility, church will not work for you. And if you lose humility, church will not work in the areas that you're in. All of a sudden, your life group doesn't work. All of a sudden, your area of service doesn't work. All of a sudden, you're saying things like, 'I'm just not getting anything out of it. I'm going through long seasons of what feels like dysfunction that surrounds you.' If humility goes missing. And in reality, if humility goes missing from leadership, a really healthy church can just spiral out of control.

This is what Peter is going to write to us today in chapter 5. So, we're in 1 Peter chapter 5. If you want to turn there in your Bibles, we're in a series called Forged where it's a letter. There are 27 books of the New Testament. Twenty-two of those 27 books are letters. They are letters that someone wrote to the church, a specific church, a specific group of people, followers of Jesus.

Peter's book is no different. This is a letter that the Apostle Peter wrote to the church in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, about 64 AD, because the church is undergoing some persecution. The government is very resistant to The Way, which is what the early church was called. They would follow The Way. Jesus says, 'I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life.' And so, as they followed the way, there was really intense persecution. And Peter has told us some difficult things. He says, 'I want you to submit to the government, a government that is hostile and oppressive to you. Church, you're to submit to their authority. Super difficult. I want you to honor your roles in marriage as you guys live together in an understanding way. You're an example to a watching world of what it looks like when two people are subject to one another and care for one another and lay their lives down for one another. I want you to honor your employers, that when you work underneath someone, that you have the opportunity to make the teachings of God our Savior attractive. Titus 2:10. That as you serve under them as though you're working for the Lord, not for man. Colossians 3:23.

And so, he's saying these really hard things, and then he's coming up in chapter 5, the final chapter, and he's saying, 'You can't do any of these without a whole lot of humility.' And so that's where we're at in the text. The subject is the humility needed amongst leaders and members for the church to work. It will break down if it doesn't work. When you lose humility at a level of church leadership, what happens is you get a lack of transparency, a lot of secrecy, hidden sin, pride, usually bursts of anger, and often it all leads to, culminates in, moral failure, and the church fails.

If you lose humility in members, you get lots of closed-door conversations, lots of opinion-driven disagreement. 'Well, I just think the right way is...' You often get large groups of people kind of mass exodus, and sometimes church splits. In addition to what looks like anger born out of a frustration, most often, because you're comparing your experience to some tradition or some experience you grew up in. And without humility, you're left with division, and you're hurt.

And so, Peter's words are really, very wise. I mean, there's something for us to heed in this text. It's going to talk about church governance, at first at least, and I'll just tell you that when I... So, we moved our family, moved from Dallas. I pastored there in Dallas for 12 years, was pastoring a church there in Dallas. As I drove down 35, it felt like there was just this covering of protection that was over me. It was just lifted, and I was exposed to the enemy's attacks. Now, some of that

is not true; it's just insecurity-driven because it's like I'm coming under another covering of elders here. But that's what it felt like as I was driving here and just kind of thinking through, 'Okay, what am I heading toward?'

The other thing that I felt was the mantle of responsibility. There's a 140-year-old church here that has continued throughout the decades, and now the baton is passed. I'm just like, I just feel the weight of that responsibility. And then when I got here, lots of conversations. You can imagine; you're the new person in a community, and you're meeting lots of people. And I learned two major observations right up front.

One is, when I would meet someone, they would almost always, people would often introduce themselves with, 'Here's where we go to church now, and here's where we used to go to church.' That's interesting to me. I was like, that's just, I will tell you, that's fairly unique to Waco. I've never experienced that before in my life. Like, I can't think of another time where I've been and someone is like, 'Hey, here's where I'm at now, here's where I'...and it was a pattern. I'd meet someone; they're like, 'Oh yeah, I'm at Highland now, but we used to be at Antioch, and we spent a stent at, you know, First Woodway.' And it was just like, 'Here's my resume; this is where I've been.' I can remember, you know, it's like, 'Hey, good to meet you.' It's like, 'Uh, you know, I get to serve at Harris Creek.' 'Oh, Harris Creek, a church, well, we used to go to FUMC, and then we went to Antioch, and now we're at First Woodway.'

It's almost like we're playing denomination Bingo, because I'm like, 'Wow, you got Methodist there, kind of the charismatic non-denominational, and then some Baptist sprinkled in.' It's just ironic, like, what's going on? And there are great reasons to leave a church; you need to know that. There are great reasons to leave a church, right? You move, it's a great reason to leave a church. If you don't prefer the music or it's too loud, that's a great... I'm just kidding; that's not a good reason to leave the church, okay? Right?

If we just move from place to place according to our preference, right? We come under an authority, and the second something's different than we prefer, we just go somewhere else, almost like it's a restaurant. We're just looking for the best Mexican food, you know? We're not going to grow; your growth's going to be stunted, and you're going to be like that tree that sprouted up but there's no roots. And when the wind comes or some challenge comes, you fall over, which raises a question: what does it mean to be a covenant member of a church?

Like, as I'm there, you know, what did I sign up for? A church is not like marriage in that way, in the sense that if you move, your marriage should go with you. But it's not like dating either, okay? It's not a flippant... And we try to say this at membership class; it's like, 'Hey, you're jumping in to financially support a mission, to use your gifts to push this mission forward here, to in part, be identified with this local expression of the body of Christ, and that's a really big deal.'

And you've got a lot of options. Choose wisely. And some of those options are right and left, like meaning not right and wrong. Like, you could say, 'Hey, I could go here; I could learn here; I could learn here.' But it's not just based on, do I like the temperature? Do I like the music? Do I like the chairs? Do I like the building? That's not what we make that decision based on.

The second thing that I realized upon moving here was that trust doesn't transfer. Trust doesn't transfer. And that was interesting, and just being at a place for over a decade, and they watch you grow up, and you serve there, and they see you navigate a bunch of different leadership challenges throughout the years, you can turn pretty quick. You say, 'Hey, we need to go left.' Everybody's like, 'We need to go left; we trust you; let's go.'

But if you come into a place and you say, 'Hey, it's my way or the highway,' you're going to find yourself in my way all by yourself real quick. And I realized that I was like, 'Oh, this local flock; they don't know me, and we're going to have to serve faithfully and love people well and be known, and that requires... I can remember specifically, as, like, 'Lord, give me the humility necessary to lead your people. That's going to require humility.'

So, the reason I'm saying that word humility is because this section of scripture ends up in this verse in verse 5. And this is what he says in verse 5 relates to verse one, verse two, verse three, and verse four. And so, this is what he says in verse 5. He says, '**All of you**,' meaning elders, church leaders, and church members.

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

You can become God's opposition if you continue in pride, and pride is so dangerous because it is blinding. Anyone who is given to pride in this room right now, doesn't know it. That's the terrifying thing. If you have people around you saying, 'Hey man, something smells funny. I think you're prideful,' stop everything, pull the parking brake, and begin to ask questions and begin with self-reflection because they might be onto something, right? So really, really think about that.

As we move through this text, I'm going to be in verses one through five. For the church to work, you must have humble elders; those elders must have humble motives, and the church must have humble members. That's the flow of this message. So, I'll start here in verse one:

'To the elders among you,' Peter writes. 'I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, who will also share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care.'

Peter, who's been writing this letter to the church in Asia Minor, now narrows his focus. He's been writing to all the followers of Jesus in that area and then says, 'And to you, a very small group of people,' which I believe is the office of elder.' It's the Greek word 'presbuteros,' where we get the word 'presbyter,' an elder in the office of elder. It's also where we get the denomination 'Presbyterian.' So this word, he's saying, 'Hey, to you, you.' He's focused on a narrower, smaller group of people, and he says, 'You are to shepherd.' He says, 'Listen, I have witnessed Christ's sufferings. I am one of you. Us. I understand the challenges that you face, and you must shepherd the flock that God has entrusted to your care.' He's going to give some specific instructions associated with this, but this is where his salutation is. 'Hey, listen guys, shepherd the flock that is under your care.'

In John 21, you see the reinstatement of Peter. Peter has denied Jesus three times, saying, 'I don't know him, I don't know him, I don't know him.' Jesus, in his kindness and mercy, finds Peter fishing and says, 'Peter,' gets around a fire. 'Peter, feed my sheep. Peter, feed my sheep. Peter, feed my lambs.' He reinstates him three times and says, 'Listen, I haven't called you to fish. I've called you to fish for people. I've called you to be a shepherd, a shepherd of my people. I want you to feed the lambs.' So, this is the language, the metaphor that's woven throughout the scripture that Peter's using.

1. *For the church to work, you must have humble elders*

I believe that an elder-led church is the biblical model. Our church has been around for 145 years, about 10 years ago, we shifted to an elder-led model. This was before I got here, and I think it was a step towards health and a step toward a model that is more consistent with the Scriptures. Now, there are lots of denominations out there, and with lots of denominations, you have lots of traditions. Some of those traditions are committee-led churches, some are congregation-led churches, and some are elder-led churches. So, we have a board of elders, people that serve in that office like Peter is talking about here. There are three God-ordained institutions: family, government, and church. Peter has addressed two of them, and here he's addressing the third.

Each of those God-ordained institutions has roles that people play within that institution for it to work. In government, he has said in chapter 2, '**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority, whether to the emperor as the supreme authority or to governors who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.**' He is presenting a hierarchy. In the same way, here he's saying, 'There's God, and God has instructions, and he passes those instructions through people who are tasked with caring for God's people.'

This is what it looks like when it works, when it is done well: the elders are chosen from the body to be shepherds of the flock, and they have qualifications they must meet. Those qualifications are outlined plainly in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus 1. I'll read to you from Titus 1: 6-9,

'An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless, not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.'

You could summarize all of that as he must be a man submitted to God's Spirit, following God's instruction and teaching through God's Word, living as an example of what it looks like to lead a Godly life. Sometimes, guys, we can be driven by pragmatism. I mean, some of you are brilliant, you've built companies and sold companies, led organizations, and you just have a mind for what should be, and we can take that and apply it to our situation. Well, this is what it should look like, and we'll come up with things like, and they're not wrong, by the way.

An example would be terms, so elders should serve terms. You can serve terms, but it's not biblically mandated that you serve for a certain time period. When we wrestle with this, multiple people said this to me, 'Well, you want to have a specific time period so that if somebody grows dysfunctional, then you don't have to live with that problem forever.' You know, and I thought, 'Wow, are we programming in our model the ability to not have to have hard conversations?' Like if somebody grows dysfunctional, you know, we're going to put our arm around them and say, 'Hey, something here is not healthy; you need to step down and get healthy.' We're going to love them, care for them, come around them, and do whatever they need for that, but we're not trying to build systems so that we don't have to have God-honoring conversations.

Another thing you'll hear under the banner of pragmatism is, 'You should have different people playing different roles.' So, like, if you're going to build a building, you need someone in construction because they can really help and contribute to that. And that's not a wrong way of thinking; it's just not a biblical way of thinking. Meaning, you have the freedom to do such things, but if we're just reading the Bible on a deserted island, we're going to walk away from 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus 1 with the reality of, 'Oh, these guys just need to be great examples of followers of Jesus. They need to live out this calling on their life in caring for the flock with, what he's about to tell us, with the right motives.'

I initially, when I wrote this message, gave you a picture of my week, the play-by-play from Monday through today or Sunday through today. They were like, 'Hey, that's boring; don't do that.' So, I'm sparing you that, but it was full of pastoral care conversations, some counseling meetings regarding marriage and parenting, and specific challenges. It was full of meetings with the staff, both the staff altogether and then individual staff throughout the week, and then smaller groups of the staff. You know, there was a hospital visit in there, there was a a celebration of life, a memorial service in there. So, then in the margins of all those things, I'm working on this message, reading commentaries, trying to understand words, original language studies, all the things to be able to stand up here and give you this message. So, that's what the week looks like, but here's the deal: that's my full-time job. I am compensated by this place to do that.

Now, a lot of nights involve phone calls at 8:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m. An early morning meeting on Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. with the other elders of this place who aren't compensated by the place. They're giving tens of hours, if you will, toward leading the body every week out of their act of service. That's what they do. So, we make part of that just like the logistical decisions that you have to make as an organization like this. We meet every Wednesday at 7:00 a.m., and we pray for this place. We ask God to give us wisdom to lead this place and the humility necessary to lead this place. We talk through the staff—is there anything that needs to be addressed amongst the elders regarding the staff? And then we talk to the body. Is there anything within the body that elders need to address? Then there are just logistical decisions. Three this week were, one was, 'What should the staff's insurance be in 2024?' So, do we want to go HSA? Do we want to continue with this particular provider? What do we do there? What's going to be the least amount of cost to Harris Creek with the greatest amount of benefit to the staff? So, it's those kinds of decisions.

Another one was, I wrote them down, so another one was, oh yeah, financial partners. Who should our financial partners be here locally and internationally? Do we have our arms around

the ways that they're spending money? What those resources are going to? Are we aligned, like-minded in mission?

Then another one was talking about this land that we purchased. Hey, what should go there? What's the best plan forward? So, we had three meetings with architects, trying to understand, okay, what's the best usage, most cost-effective usage of this building? Do we add on to this building? Do we start over across the street? And just like praying in that and listening to the Lord in and through that. So, those are the kinds of things that we're meeting about and talking about every single week. Then, they speak into my life. So, they say, 'Hey, this would be a good opportunity for you. I wouldn't do that one; I think that's a distraction.' What I want you to know, and they're here today, is they're not scared of me. They're not in the slightest bit intimidated by me. So, I hear 'no' or 'I wouldn't do that' a lot. I can bring them an idea, thinking, 'I'm so excited about this,' and then there's this kind of collective 'I wouldn't do that,' and it's like, 'Okay, next. What else should we talk about?'

And so, they feed the sheep. They feed the sheep, but feeding the sheep often means cleaning up the pens, cleaning up the manure, caring for those that need to be cared for, moving close to them, and loving them. There's a challenging aspect of that because sometimes the sheep aren't up for that, right? It's like, 'Hey, I want to continue', especially when you're talking to someone about their saying, like, 'I want to continue in this, and I don't really want your feedback right now.' In fact, I've got some real-life footage of these guys caring for the sheep this week, and I thought I would show you this. Watch this.

Video of sheep hitting a man [laughs]

Oh yeah, that one hurt. Here's the deal. I show that at church leaders conferences. Here's what I would give to you. That's not entirely true here. Like, for whatever reason, by the grace of God today, I think there's a lot of health in our church, and it seems to me that when we've moved close for care and correction, people have been largely really receptive to that, and that's worth celebrating. As I think through the humility of the body, and the humility of the elders, there was, as I wrote this this week, a lot to celebrate. So, he says this in verse two:

'Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care.' Then he says this, 'Watching over them, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be. Not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve. Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.'

He says lots of 'not that, but this' statements, and he's speaking specifically to the motives of the elders.

2. Church leaders must serve with humble motives.

Under the banner of verse 5's humility, they must be driven by humble motives. Verse two says, not motivated by duty, 'I have to,' but by desire, 'I get to.' It's an honor to. The second part of verse two says, not motivated by financial gain, but a heart to give. So, I am the only elder on

payroll, and the other guys, they give this as their area of service. So often, we're, you know, some of them will be in a 30-hour a week assignment, and we'll gather on a retreat. This has happened a few times where I'm like, 'Hey, whatever we pay you, I just want to double it because it's a low-cost statement.'

Verse three says, **'Not motivated by authority, but living as an example.'**

I think so many people think leading is like, 'Oh, people have to do what I say.' That's not biblical leading. Like, some of you are reading the best leadership books out there. When you understand what the Bible says about leading, it says that leading is serving. In Mark chapter 10, Jesus grabs his guys and says, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord their authority over them.' All of the disciples are like, 'Yeah, you're talking about Rome, the emperor, and the soldiers. They're oppressing us, abusing us, they flex on us, and take our money.' And Jesus says, 'But not so with you.' He says this, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last, and whoever wants to be the greatest must become the slave of all.' Then he says this in verse 45,

'For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many.'

So, Jesus took what was available to him to serve as many people as he could, and this is biblical leadership — that you would take what is available to you and that you would serve those around you.

And then he says this at the end of that verse, if you look back at it, verse four, he says, 'Here's the right motive.' He goes, 'Wrong motive, wrong motive, wrong motive, right motive.' When the chief Shepherd, or Jesus, appears, you receive an everlasting crown. Now, I've never had this thought before, but it's really interesting that if you do this job of serving the church well because you're like, 'Why would anybody do that?' Well, it's actually good to want to do it, that you receive a crown that people will see a million years from now and a billion years from now. You get some sort of eternal reward, like the crown that you get is one in heaven that you have forever and ever and ever and ever.

He says this is a right motive, because it's interesting; it's odd to me that he challenges every earthly motive, but he says, 'Here's an eternal motive that is a right motive.' This is a right reason to do this. 1 Timothy 3:1 says, 'It's good to want to be an elder.' It says specifically,

'Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.'

But it's not the task of an authoritarian; it's the task of a servant. It's not people in positions of authority who get privileges; it's those with a huge heart to serve and to protect and to care for. It says that they are to be the examples.

Here's what this means, and it says some crazy things. It means that if you're here and you're married, I hope that you love and pursue and desire and cherish your wife like Bill Neilson loves Carol Neilson and cares for her. I'll just insert this right here. Bill did a celebration of life

yesterday, a funeral if you will, for his friend in his life group, and he went up there, and I, you know, our dear friend Jim Cox is with Jesus today. He's been in this room many times. If you know him, he had a long fight with ALS, which is just an awful disease, and the Lord called him home on Wednesday. I don't think I've ever been more encouraged at a celebration of life because as they honored him, the amazing husband that he was, the amazing father that he was, then it was a commercial for life groups because they just said, 'Hey, we came around him, and Bill read to him three times a week with others in their life group, read to him multiple times a week, cared for him, helped tuck him in, read to him. I mean, all of these, they just showed up and they looked at his wife and said, 'Hey, we're not going anywhere. We got you. You're still going to be an important member of this life group, and we're going to make sure you're cared for from here on out.' It was beautiful. They are examples.

And so what that means is, I hope that as you seek to parent, that you would parent like Jim and Carol Underwood, right? That I can hold them up and say, 'Hey, here are the examples to follow'. That you would do like them. That as you teach and instruct from God's word, as you seek to live a life of righteousness, purity, sobriety, and all of these things, that you would do so like Blair Browning, that you would follow his example as he teaches others the way and lives as an example and says, 'Hey, follow me as I follow Christ.' That as that, that you would have the work ethic of Stacey Smith, not just pointing out the gaps but standing in the gaps. 'Hey, somebody needs food; I'll cook for them'. 'We need to mow the grass; I'll mow it. I got it. I got you. I'll show up.' Right? That they would do for the church. They're like, 'Right, some of you are like, I don't even know them. I need to know them.' You don't know them because they're faithful servants.

Honestly, a lot of times when you see the elders, it's not good news, but they're doing their job. I could say, 'I want you to serve the body like Chris Holmes serves the body,' not just an attorney, not just an elder, but also a parking attendant helping, you passes him on the way in today, and you didn't know it, but he's showing you where to go. That's one. That's our elders. And I would just tell you, you have really good elders. I'm not saying that out of my bias. They have an amazing heart for this body and to see God move in and through this place. They're seeking what His word says, praying, asking Him for wisdom, and they do a lot of listening. They're listening, saying, 'Alright, Lord, where do you want us to go next? What do you want us to do?' So, whenever a decision is made, you can trust that it wasn't flippant. And you think, 'What's my role in that, again?' You're going to know early, and you're going to know often. But don't ever stop praying for them, that they would hear from the Lord and do everything that He says.

Verse five says, '**In the same way, you who are younger,**' so I believe that means younger in the faith. He's kind of using this juxtaposing this word 'elder' with that, and the context lends itself to that.

'**You who are younger, or members of the body**' would be a way to think about it, like the congregation. '**Submit yourselves to your elders.**' And then he says this, '**All of you, so elders and congregation, or elders and members, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble,**' which is a reference to Proverbs 3:34.

I don't know if this happens in your home, but in our home, there are a lot of conversations like, 'What should I wear at church?' So maybe you have a roommate, and you're like, 'Hey, does this look okay?' Or Weston will come downstairs or from his room, and he's got his athletic shorts and his white socks and slides on. He's like, 'Can I wear this?' You know, 'I don't know, buddy'. I want to answer the question for all of you, and kids, you can't use this against your parents, but I don't care. I don't care if you come in a suit and a tie if that's the tradition you grew up in, and your heart is, 'Hey, I want to honor God in this.' It's not to be prideful, and it's not to gain attention, but if you're like, 'I want to honor God in this,' and you come in a suit and tie, amazing! That's awesome. If you're like, 'You know what? I'm just going to be in flip-flops and athletic shorts and a T-shirt,' and your motive is, 'I don't want any pretense. I don't want anybody thinking,' so I'm coming like this.

But the thing you have to wear, the Harris Creek dress code, what you must wear every single time you come to church is a whole lot of humility. You've got to put it on. You know, you stand in that closet, and you get dressed in a whole lot of humility. It's the only way it works. I've got to put it on; you've got to put it on. We've all got to put it on; the body, the members, the elders, everyone has to clothe themselves in humility. So, for the church to work, you must have humble members.

It takes a lot of humility to lead like an elder. It takes a lot of humility to follow this Word. 'Submit yourselves to your elders' takes a lot of humility to do that. It's never been easier to not trust leadership in this world. I think so many of us, in the news we read, the headlines, the things that make it into the headlines. Faithfulness doesn't make it into the headlines. Scandal makes it into the headlines. So, it's so easy today to be skeptical of leaders. But that's why you pray hard, and you ask that Lord who is sovereign to move their hearts in the right direction. Say, give me a heart, Lord, would you give me a heart to trust.

3. For church to work, you must have humble members.

I've talked extensively about the roles leaders play with cross-references, and I'll talk into this with cross-references as well. These are the cross-references in your Scripture, in your Bible. I want to confess to you that I feel insecure doing this because it seems really self-serving. With that said, I am reading to you what the Scripture says. I think these are verses that are easy to pass by, and that's why I love going through a book. Because this is a section that I wouldn't be super excited to teach. 'I can't wait to put that in front of them, that is going to really get them.' But as you go through a book you see the manifold wisdom of God unfold verse by verse.

So, what it says in Hebrews 13:17,

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

So where it says, submit to your leaders, it is talking specifically about church leaders. That is the context of the passage. That you're to submit to those that lead you at church. Submit to their authority because they keep watch over you. And they're going to give an account. I'm going to

stand before God, and He may ask, 'How did you do with that one?' I might say, 'Well, I'd probably just fall over if He asked and worship.' In this hypothetical conversation, we'd say, 'Father, what we tried to do as the church grew is to put your sheep in smaller groups of people to care for one another and to build a system and a process that we felt the freedom to do according to your word so that they would be cared for. It's not perfect, and at times it's really messy, but that's what we're doing here.'

First Timothy 5 is another one; it says,

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

My birthday is. . . no, I'm kidding, that is a joke. Just didn't go over well. That's just that nervous, as I read that, I'm like, 'Okay, this is what the Scripture says. It feels self-serving. As elders submit to Christ; you submit to elders. It's a beautiful picture, very similar to what Paul says in Ephesians 5 as he talks about the family; Christ is the chief Shepherd, He's going to come back. Everyone will give an account. So, we have to operate with a lot of humility.

And if you don't, you don't know it. If you're not very humble, if you're given to pride, you can't see it. So, if someone says, 'Hey, I think that was prideful, or I see some pride, or I don't know that was very humble,' you pull the parking brake, go really slow, listen, and get really reflective, and you start asking great questions. Because they're doing you a favor, because it's blinding.

So here are some things for your consideration: If you're not serving, it might be due to a lack of humility. If you can't stay somewhere long, you probably lack humility. If you're the outlier in many conversations and think you're right, you lack humility. If conflict follows you, if you're the common denominator in dysfunction, you lack humility. If you need recognition, you need someone to notice you, you need the notoriety, you lack humility. So, what do you do about it? The application? Serve. If you don't serve somewhere, serve. Serve in a way that no one will notice. Serve faithfully, serve in an area that might be right outside your expertise to grow there. If you're not a member of a church, this is your chance. Show up here Tuesday, make sure you're here, jump in, let's go all in.

Here's an assignment: Go to life group and say, 'Where are my blind spots? Where might pride be winning in my life?' And let them answer you. And listen, don't be defensive, just respond with thank you. That's a great exercise that will save you a lot of pain later.

In summary, for the church to work, you must have humble elders, and those elders must have humble motives. The church must have humble members. Every week, and when I say every week, I can be excitable about things, and I can be an over-stater when I preach. I try to measure my words carefully. So, every week, more than 52 times a year, I get an email, and it's from Seattle, California, or Arkansas, somewhere else. They say, 'Hey, I listen to your podcast; I'm so encouraged by what you said; you've helped me in my walk and...' and it's really long and it has some it's like 'man you know my there's an affair and my kids and there's an addiction and my boss and it's so hard and this is difficult and this is difficult...' it just has a lot of details. It's really long has a lot of details in it, and I respond the same. 'Thank you for your email; I want

you to know I didn't read it in its entirety. I see that you are reaching out from somewhere else and I want to encourage you to talk to your local pastors and shepherds, people who know you. I have a flock locally that I will give an account for, and hopefully someone there is going to give an account for you. Would you bring in people into this problem that know you and can help you that are yielded to the Spirit of God by the Word of God.

Now, every month, just about every month, more than 12 times a year, I'll have a conversation face-to-face with someone saying, 'This is going on; and say hey uh you know this is going on can't pay rent this you know fair this situation really hard addiction kids all the things really it's just this really tough overwhelming situation and I need your help and I need Harris Creek to help.

I ask, 'How long have you been here?' 'This is my third week here.' You know, I go to this church I really love it here you know I've been here and then here I was at FUMC and then Antioch and then Highland and then First Woodway and then here and but 'We need help' and I'm like, 'Who can I talk to that knows you?' 'I don't know I left there because this... they told me that I didn't like this instruction, so I moved.'

See, the problem with pride is that it is very blinding so you can't see it and so I don't know you. We are going to try to help you, but I have a lot of work to do to try to understand how to help you. I am going to have to dig in to understand what's really happening here. You are the person that fell and there was no one to pick you up because you've just gone around from place to place according to your preference. If anybody tells you hard truth, you're out, and you're the tree that sprouted up, and you'll fall over.

Can I tell you something? All of this is born, that passion you hear in my voice is born from my own experience. And I don't mean my experience as an elder; I mean my experience of going to church for a long time, sitting in the back, never becoming a member, just consuming. 'Hey, I'm just here for a good message, a little shot in the arm, give me some good worship, I want to raise my hands, I want to *feel* things'. I did it for a long time; I was the guy, and I'm embarrassed. I would write the longest emails: 'Hey Pastor, I know I'm just 22, but let me tell you how to do your job.' This, this, this, this—I mean pages of emails. I wish I had them today; I'd love to read them to you, and you would laugh at me. I mean, I was such, I'm sure, a point of grief for multiple people. If you were listening, I'm sorry.

And I did it, you know? They would make decisions, and I'd be like, 'That's not what I would do, you know? This, this is—that's not how I would do, that's not where I would build, that's not where I would go, and you need to focus on a plan.' I would say these things to them, and I would bump my head on the 'get connected here' sign, and I would get a paper cut on the tear this off. We would love to help you become a member here and belong here, and then I would sit down, and the announcement guy would say, 'And if you're here and you're not a member or you need to get connected, we would love to help you.' And I would hear that, and it would go in one ear out the other, because no, I'm just here to consume. Don't get me wrong, Pastor; I just want a shot in the arm, that's it. I just want to feel good for the week, get me through the next Sunday.

And one Sunday, I became a member. I went to the membership class with a friend, and a friend walked up to the guy who led it and said, 'Hey, I just want someone to teach us the Bible,' and that guy said, 'I'll teach you the Bible.' He sat down with us at a round table, and we started moving through the Bible, verse by verse, starting in Genesis 1, verse one. And God changed everything.

The most important decision I ever made, outside of trusting Christ, was becoming a member of a church. You might say, 'Well, what about your marriage?' I wouldn't be married if I hadn't joined a church, if I hadn't been known there and grown there. And that guy who sat down at the table is the guy who called me five years later and said, 'Hey, would you come work here?' I mean, could you imagine? And that was the shift. So you need to know that you were made and designed and purposed for belonging to a body, being protected there by leaders, and serving, contributing, and using your gifts there. And if you don't do that, you will get to the end of your life, and you will be at a memorial service similar to the one I was at yesterday, but with a very different outcome. Rather than people saying, 'Man, he was such a wonderful member of his church,' they will say, 'Yeah, they attended. Now they went, I think they went there for a little while and there for a little bit, yeah, they attended.' It's just different. For this to work, we need a lot of humility—from me, from us, from everyone.

Let me pray that we would have that. Father, it probably needs to be supernatural, like we're going to need some supernatural help. Yeah, we need some supernatural help. We all have pride, and we can't see it. I can't see it; I can't see where I'm prideful. Thank you for people who love me enough to tell me. Give us hearts to listen, and Father, as we leave today, pray that you would just help us—help us know the truth and grow in your word to contribute according to Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.