

Why Elders / Pastors & Deacons?

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4.

If you're visiting with us, there's a black Bible in the chair in front of you. You can go to the back and find page 152 in the back of that black Bible.

Page 152, Ephesians 4. Ephesians, go eat popcorn. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. Go eat popcorn. So you hit pop or corn, you've gone too far.

Make sure you go back to eat. Get it? Go eat. Never mind. That's how you remember. Books of the Bible, go eat popcorn. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians. Okay, never mind. So anyways, Ephesians 4.

152 on that black Bible. Ephesians 4. I'm gonna start reading verse 7. Ephesians 4, 7. And while you're turning there, I'm doing two special sermons, which always gets me in trouble.

[1:05] I'm good at that. I'm good at getting in trouble. So, and I like to be in trouble. Just ask my mom. So today will get me in trouble. Next week will get me in more trouble.

It's wonderful. I love it. And so two special sermons today and then next Sunday. And then we're gonna start the book of Philemon, which will probably be two Sundays.

And I'm actually gonna do the book of Titus. And then we're gonna start the gospel of John, which will be probably January of next year, of 2022. So that's kind of the, that's where we're going.

Two special sermons today. Next week, the book of Philemon, the book of Titus, probably seven or eight weeks in the book of Titus. And then John's gospel will probably be 55 weeks in that bad boy. So let's plan that out.

And even we'll probably do an Old Testament prophetic book after the gospel of John. So we're planning out really far in advance for you. But anyways, for today, Ephesians 4, look at verse seven with me.

[2:01] I'm gonna read verse seven through 16. Seven through 16. But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. Now this, he ascended, what does it mean? Except that he also descended to the parts, slower parts of the earth.

He who descended is himself also. He who ascended far above all the heavens, he might fill all things. Verse 11. These are the gifts that he gave. These gifts of grace.

He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, unto the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Thus, verse 14, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, from whom, verse 16, the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

[3:43] There's a kids show that my kids enjoy watching. It's based out of Australia, right? It's about a dad and a mum, M-U-M, that's how they say mum, they say mom, they say mum, and they're two young girls.

It's really a cute little show, and there's one episode where the oldest girl, she kept asking, but why? But why? But why? And pretty soon, the dad just said, well, just because.

Kids just, they like to ask the question, why? Why? Why? Why? Well, I think you adults like to do that too. Maybe to just be annoying.

Well, at least I would do that just to be annoying. Why? Why do we do this? We want to know why we should do the things that we're commanded to do, which is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as it's done in the spirit of humility.

So today, and next week, we're gonna ask two why questions. I'm gonna give you the why question. Just for lack of the, I'm running the risk of being self-serving, but I think it's important for us to know this.

[4:55] Why, today, why do we have elders and pastors, elders or pastors, and deacons? Why elders? Why pastors?

Why do we have them? And deacons? What's the purpose of them? Why elders or pastors and deacons?

Why did God do this? Well, the emphasis, obviously, again, is for elders and pastors, and here's why, in a nutshell, because, why elders?

Because Jesus loves his body, giving them gifts and serving them. Jesus loves his body. This is his body. It's a reflection of part of his body.

There's a universal church, obviously, but the universal church, how is it described? How is it, how is it shown itself in the local church? He loves his body, giving them gifts, but also he loves to serve them, giving them gifts, gifts of grace, pastors, and likes to serve them, deacons.

[6:07] Another way to put this, gifts Jesus has given to his church are pastors and teachers. That's Ephesians 4, verse 7.

Gifts Jesus has given to his church are pastors and teachers. So I'm a gift from God to you. Oh. Oh. I'm a gift of God to you.

I'm not going to wrap myself up my little wrapping paper. See the bow? It's like I'm a gift. I thought you'd get a kick out of that. Gifts Jesus has given to his church are pastors and teachers.

And the way he serves in the body is through deacons. So today, we're going to emphasize again, the why question.

Why elders? Why are they so vital to the health of a church? That's really the emphasis here in Ephesians 4, verses 7 through 16.

[7:21] So let me give you a long statement which sums it up for you. Pastors are called to shepherd and teach the body for the express purpose of equipping them to do the work of the ministry so that there, the body, is built up and edified which brings unity of the faith, a knowledge of Christ so that God's people mature being Christ-like in the way they live.

That's why there's pastors or elders. elders. And we've said this before just to make sure that you know this, I'll say it again, elders are pastors who are bishops who are overseers.

It's the same person. There's not elder and then pastor like separate like pastors over elder, elders over pastor. No, that's not how it works in the New Testament. New Testament and elders are pastors and overseers are bishop.

It's all the same. It's the same guy. So that's what pastors are called to do and we're gonna unpack this because you'll notice the different phrases that are used there pulled out from Ephesians 4, 7 through 16 and we're gonna unpack that in a moment.

But I also wanna emphasize and I'm not gonna spend too much time with the deacons but you need to know this as well. The deacons care for the physical needs of the church. Why deacons?

Because they care for the physical needs of the church maintaining the unity in the body by supporting the ministry of the pastors.

[8:56] They free up pastors to be able to minister in the word and prayer. Acts chapter 6. So deacons do not shepherd.

Kalen is not a shepherd. That's not his role. That's not his responsibility. He's a cheerleader. Don't break out in pom-poms. Amen.

Pastors are called to teach and shepherd. That's the way that pastors serve Christ's body. They're gifts to you in a way that there's a service taking place to care for the physical needs of the body to maintain that unity and be the cheerleaders.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Isn't this a great place to be? That's the deacons. So I started to give you my disclaimer so I'll remind you of the disclaimer I gave just a few moments ago.

I have two disclaimers actually. I'm not going to go into the role of the elder. I'm not going to go into that. Like the what or the how. We're not going to talk about that. I've done messages on the who, on the what, on the how.

[10:07] I'm not going to go into that. I'm going to tell you the why. Why do I have elders? What's their purpose? My second disclaimer though is this. Just because a church doesn't have any pastors or elders or any deacons, that doesn't mean that church is not a true church.

You hear what I said with that? Disclaimer is, just because a church doesn't have any pastors or elders or any deacons, that doesn't mean that church is not a true church.

If you like, you can keep your finger in Ephesians. You can go back in your Bibles if you so choose or you can listen to me read. Acts chapter 14. Acts chapter 14.

Acts chapter 14. This is, in Acts chapter 14, chapter 13, Paul began his first missionary journey. He planted all these churches.

And chapter 14, he goes back to those churches, like he says, verse 22, strengthening the souls of the disciples and encourage them to continue the faith.

[11:23] But Acts 14, verse 23, notice what Luke writes. Notice, and when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Notice, a couple things. First, they appointed elders, plural, in every church, singular. So there's a plurality of elders or plurality of pastors. But notice, second, it was already a church.

If a body of people don't have a pastor, it doesn't mean it's not a church. So what makes a true church?

We have to answer that question. What makes a true church? What is it? A true church is an assembly of baptized Jesus followers in a specific, particular location who've covenanted together to gather regularly to worship the triune God and to minister to one another.

That's a true church. It's an assembly, a gathering. Jesus' fathers have been baptized and it's in a specific, particular location and they covenanted it together.

[12:40] They make an agreement with each other. We're gonna gather together on a regular basis to worship the triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and to minister to one another, to serve one another, care for one another.

And the reason why they respond this way is because of the gospel. Because when these believers, these Jesus followers, when they gather together, they understand God should condemn us, God should damn us and yet because we're sinners and yet He's shown His grace to us by sending Jesus who lived and died.

He was the perfect sacrifice. He rose from the dead. We've repented and we put our trust in Jesus alone. That gospel of grace, that's why we come together. And if you're here, you're not a Christian, you should respond to that gospel message.

You should repent and trust in Christ because you don't know the Lord Jesus but you can if you come to Him in repentant faith and trust Him. He'll save you.

But that's why, that's why believers gather together because they're saved. Because God's been gracious to them. Because God has delivered them and rescued them so they come to worship Him together.

[13:59] That's what makes a true church. And this is vital because of what it automatically begs next which we'll look at next week.

Membership. Membership in a church. What is that? Why is there membership? So, notice though from Acts chapter 14 a true church is a gathering of these believers but they needed to have elders. So that means when a church does not have a pastor or pastors they'll not be as healthy as they could be. There'll be a lack of leadership.

Why? Because they're gifts of grace. Gifts of grace. A lack of leadership.

A lack of growth. A lack of healthiness. A lack of ministry if there's no pastors. If there's no elders or few pastors then the work of the ministry will suffer.

[15:11] Things will fall through the cracks. That's why there should be elders. That's why there should be pastors. Paul understood it was important. That's why he appointed them. So there should be pastors because it's Jesus' gracious gift to his body and he they are meant to help the body grow together.

Plus there's a need for a plurality of elders. To have a plurality of men shepherding God's church it's assumed in the New Testament. The weight of shepherding God's people needs to be shared. So I told you we're going to go back to Ephesians we're going to kind of unpack that a little bit more and we will but we're going to also look at some other key passages which I'm going to put up there on the board that kind of helps us to understand this why question and answer this why elders question.

So why elders more specifically why elders one pastors or elders are called to shepherd God's people that's why. Here's some verses for you to write down I'm going to read them if you are in Acts you can flip over to Acts chapter 20 in verse 28 from verse 17 Paul called to him the elders of the church so he's talking to the elders of the church of Ephesus and notice what he says in Acts chapter 20 verse 28 he said be on guard for yourselves on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers the word bishop to shepherd where you get the word pastor the church of God which he purchased with his own blood elders are bishops who pastor it's all three terms they're called to shepherd pastors or elders are called to shepherd God's people that's why you need them we read 1 Peter this morning we read that together out loud Peter says from verse 2 of chapter 5 of 1 Peter shepherd the flock of God among you exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily according to God and not for sore to gain but with eagerness nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock and then I put up there as a cross reference for you 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 12 through 14 but we request of you brethren excuse me that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction he's talking about leaders elders pastors and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work live in peace with one another and notice how how elders are supposed to shepherd and we urge you brethren admonish the unruly encourage the faint hearted to help the weak be patient with all men so pastors shepherd

[18:40] Jesus sheep for whom he died he died for them his people and pastors are called to shepherd and teach them that's why they should be part of a church I mean Peter says you know how they're supposed to do that exercising oversight not under compulsion willingly for Christ eagerly that's just how but as pastors or elders are called to shepherd God's people notice this means that pastors or elders are meant to know those whom they shepherd there needs to be a process by which these men know who they're supposed to shepherd which again begs the next title which we're going to look at next week membership how can pastors shepherd if they don't know who's in and who's out who's a part of this local church and who's not part of the local church how do they know so pastors or elders are called to shepherd

God's people number two why elders why pastors because they shepherd and teach the body to equip them for ministry now you can go back to Ephesians chapter four we're going to camp out here for a while in Ephesians chapter four verse 11 again this is the gifts that he gives some apostles some prophets some evangelists some pastors and teachers by the way we here at Cottonwood Bible Church don't believe that there's apostles today or prophets today they ceased with the apostles when they died so we do not believe that God speaks to apostles or prophets today but these gifts of evangelists pastors and teachers they're still a part of today notice what he says verse 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry unto the building up of the body of Christ pastors are meant to be as

Jesus calls it in the seat of Moses they are the ones who exercise the teaching in Jesus church the seat of Moses Jesus talks about that in Matthew chapter 23 with the Pharisees remember he says to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 are you the teacher of Israel so pastors or elders their role is to be in the seat of Moses to teach the people and as the members hold to the truth of the gospel pastors or elders they're called to be the gate keepers of the gospel and they equip you to minister my role is to equip you to minister my role is to give you the resources so you do the work of ministry but usually people don't think that way they think how that's why we pay you me that's why we pay you you're supposed to be doing it my friend that's not how the new testament says it

I equip you and now you go do ministry you go serve each other you go encourage one another you go care for each other but that's your job and I'm not saying it's not what happens is you kick the can down the road and you say well you go do that because I'm that's why we pay you but I'm supposed to equip you I'm supposed to give you the resources so you can do the work of ministry I'm just doing what I'm supposed to do keep in mind too that pastors are teachers but not all

teachers are pastors from verse 11 some there's a subset of pastors to teachers so pastors are going to be teachers but not all teachers are pastors which we have men here at the Bible Church they're not pastors but they're teaching which is fine

I'm in the seat of Moses so I'm overseeing what's going on who's teaching but pastors why do you have pastors to shepherd and to teach you so you're equipped to do ministry you're equipped to do the work of service and notice three pastors or elders shepherd and teach the body unto its health and growth the health and growth of the body again in Ephesians 4 verse 13 until we all attain to unity of faith of the knowledge of the Son of God to maturity what's the standard of maturity to the measure of the stature of the fullness which belongs to the fullness of Christ and notice what else happens so then you're no longer here and there by false teaching by the trickery of men verse 15 but speaking the truth and love we grow up in all things into him who's the head that's

[24:06] Christ we grow there's health you need to eat you probably should eat good food too right you're going on Cheetos and and Coke as wonderful as Coke is probably not a good diet for you to be on right we all would agree with that you need a good steady diet of good foods and for some of you need some even refiner foods I know I do but these pastors elders they're vital for your spiritual health and growth as a follower of Jesus again I'm running the risk of being self serving but I'm going to be honest with you I am a significant aspect to your spiritual growth and I am a gaze by which you can see how healthy you are and how much you're growing I know that sounds self serving but that's true that's from the text but if you're not around it's so important for you to be attending and connecting with each other not just at this time but other times as well take advantage of take advantage of the means of grace that are given to you we got Sunday we have Wednesdays but then that's true these are means by which you can grow in Christ and be prepared to suffer for his sake in the days ahead but take advantage of the other opportunities that are given to you to minister to minister to one another to care for one another to take time and spend time with each other pastors are vital for spiritual health and growth we are as we teach you the word of God we will talk more about your responsibility as a member next week because members you're called to make sure that the pastor is actually giving you the word of God that's your job you got to make sure this pope is proclaiming to you the gospel and the true gospel not like a prosperity gospel not a false gospel so you have a responsibility to hold to sound doctrine as well and we need deacons who serve the body who take care of those physical needs who maintain the unity in God's church they're the cheerleaders who free up the pastors so the pastors can preach teach counsel and train you for the work of ministry again it doesn't mean that deacons won't teach ours do

Caitlin teaches it doesn't mean others in the church won't teach Travis is not a deacon he teaches the youth Chris and Shauna they teach the kids Riley and Alyssa have been jumping in there periodically to teach them too but it does mean this it does mean that you cannot treat a deacon as an elder or pastor don't treat him like that that's why Caitlin when he senses that he's going to direct the issues right back to me he's going to that's his default hey I'm not going to do that because he doesn't want to end up taking on roles or responsibilities that he's not meant to have he does that well he's here to serve you to maintain that unity and be a cheerleader go go go it's a great place for us to be it's a great church for us to be a part of isn't this great so we need a plurality of men raised up by God by his grace by the power of his spirit who will shepherd God's people who will carry the load who will care for his flock not for their own glory but for the glory of Jesus and you know what members you should be praying for this you should be praying that there will no longer be a solo pastor

I'm weary of it pray that God will raise up men who will take the load and shepherd God's people and deacons too I mean look at Caitlin he's tired poor guy oh that's because you were up last night he's on call so I'm glad he's actually here thank you Caitlin pray for deacons too God to raise up men who just want to serve just want to maintain that unity they're cheerleaders why pastors? pastors are called to shepherd and teach the body for the express purpose of equipping them to do the work of the ministry so that they're built up and they're edified they meaning the body built up edified which brings the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ so that God's people mature being Christ-like and remember don't ever forget this there's only one senior pastor here his name's Jesus not Jim he's the senior pastor he's pastoring his church don't forget that because why elders why pastors Jesus loves his body he loves his body way more than I do he's giving them gifts he's serving them and the gifts he's given to his church are pastors and teachers he loves his church way more than we ever will doesn't he?

he does would you pray with me? and Father we are praying that you would raise up men in your church and we know it will take time so as we are praying for men to to raise up to shepherd your people we also pray you would help us to be patient and to wait for your timing help us not to circumvent things go around go around you but to be patient we pray that we would be a church that holds a sound doctrine committed to truth committed to you

[30 : 48] Jesus and not just to write theology but write relational theology a theology that's about a relationship with you oh Lord Jesus because we love you we're so enamored over your love for us we're so enamored over you create in us a deeper desire for your truth for you Jesus and for your body and raise up deacons men who will serve and maintain that unity and just take on things and freeing up so we pastors can minister in the word and prayer we pray for that for this church for us we need that we pray for our spiritual health and growth we pray that we would consume with such passion the word and we would learn from good books directing us to the word to the Lord

Jesus protect us from false teaching from every wind of doctrine that comes under the sun that was to grow in all aspects into Christ and there be a building up of the body in love for you and for each other as we do as we do each Sunday as we do each Sunday