

Leadership in the Church

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. It is, as I said last night, a great joy for us to be here, and I feel like I picked up where we left off 17 months ago in a lot of conversations, and we're anxious to do that and looking forward to spending time together.

This morning, I'm going to build on something I referenced last night, which is I referenced a couple times that Deuteronomy 6 references the place and influence of the church in your family.

And, you know, Ann and I, as we reflect back on raising our three girls, I can't imagine trying to do that without the church. And I would expect you feel the same way, and I thought it would be good to take a session to kind of review what the church is and how it plays into the home.

They are not separate. They are very, very much intertwined and rowing the boat in the same direction, and that is to fulfill what it says in Deuteronomy 6, which is to know God, to worship God, to obey God, and to love God.

And the church is a collection of people who do that, hopefully. 1 Peter 2 says, in describing the church, you've probably heard this before, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who saved you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

[1 : 3 6] For once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. You had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. And if you recall from last night, when Moses is talking to the parents in the nation of Israel, he says, when your children ask you, what does all this mean?

That is essentially what he did. He reviewed the excellencies of him who brought us out of darkness and into light. And the excellencies of Christ include his mercies, which are new every morning, that include his rescue of our souls from darkness.

Without a home, spiritually wandering, unwanted, deceived, blind, condemned, and distressed, and yet in Christ's kindness, he brought us together as a group of his people.

And he didn't just gather his own race, nation, priesthood, and people to just wander alone without a shepherd. We didn't go from wandering in darkness alone to wandering around together, trying to figure all this out.

Because when Christ was here on earth, he made two promises to the church. First, he promised the church, and then he promised two things to his chosen people. First, that he would send a helper, the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 0 0] And that's a whole different session. We won't spend a lot of time on that this morning. He sent his helper to literally to teach us, to guide us, to comfort us, to confront us, and to care for us, and to pray with us and for us.

I don't know if you've ever thought about that. That is amazing. That's what the Holy Spirit does for us in the church. But knowing us, he created us, of course, and caring for us in his perfect love and wisdom, he also knew that we would need to be led.

We would need to be stimulated, to be held accountable, to be taught, to be shown the way, to sit under the guidance of people like Moses.

We would need and crave fellowship with other believers. And because of that, he gave us the church. And the church was announced by Christ in Matthew 16.

And you can read that. But I want to jump ahead now to Hebrews chapter 10. If you have your Bible, open to Hebrews 10. And we're going to be here very briefly on our way to Hebrews 13.

[4 : 14] But in Hebrews 10, the writer of Hebrews lays out the purpose of the church, the beauty of the church, the value of the church.

And as we consider the family and the interaction with the church, I want you to see that church is not something that we just teach our children to be a part of because they need to obey you.

And they're not being a part of church just because it's an issue of obedience to Christ. Being a part of the church is our desperate need.

It is what we do because we need each other. And because that is what Christ gave us as a means for a very, very important purpose.

And we see that starting in verse 24 of Hebrews 10. Actually, let me jump up to verse 23. Verse 23 is the verse that describes how each of us should be described on our last day on this earth.

[5 : 21] Looking back. Verse 23 says, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. That is the story of a believer's life.

We hold fast to our confession without wavering. There is a summary statement of what Moses was saying in Deuteronomy 6 is the goal of you in your family of what you're going to produce from your home.

Our young men and women who follow your example, by the way, in holding fast the faith, their confession, and of our hope without wavering.

And it goes on to say, For he who promises faithful. And I want to stop there. How many times do we hear of people who do not hold fast?

They let go of the rope. We heard a lot in the news this week of somebody we all know who let go of the rope. How do you not let go of the rope?

[6 : 23] When you let your children go out of your home, and by the way, you won't let them go. They're going to go. How do you know? What confidence do you have that they're going to hold on to the rope?

Well, it goes on to say in verse 23 that Christ will never let them go. Christ will never let you go. So how does the rope get let loose?

It's on us. So verse 23 says, He who promises faithful. The translation there is he's not going to let go of us. Verse 24 deals with how do we not let go of him?

It says this, And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Well, Christ does it. He holds tight to us. Verse 24. Verse 25 is a description of the church. How do you hold fast? How will your children hold fast? They will understand that church is not just a matter of obedience, but it is a matter of desperate need.

[7 : 33] And that's why we say this is what Christians do. Christians go to church. We learned this a lot in my church in 2020 when people came back after not being able to go to church.

And I didn't hear from anybody that they're really glad they could obey God now. What I heard from people with tears in their eyes was, I need this.

I need to be here. I need to be with God's people. And that is, in a sense, in our church, what we needed to go through to understand this principle that it's not just obedience, it's need.

It's accessing what God has given us. It says consider, in verse 24, consider how to stimulate one another. That means we need to think about, we need to ponder and take notes.

And that's what we're going to do this morning for a few minutes. It says to stimulate one another. Let us consider how to stimulate one another. That word stimulate is not like drinking a cup of coffee when you're really tired.

[8 : 36] That's not what that word means. What that word means in the original language, it literally means to annoy and agitate. Isn't that great? Welcome to church. I'm going to annoy and agitate you.

But that's exactly what we should expect. That is exactly what we should look for. That's what causes us to hold fast as we have people in our life who will stimulate us, not just for the fun of it, but for, what does it say?

Stimulate towards love and good deeds. It's stimulation with a purpose. You can read Hebrews chapter 4, starting in verse 12, about the effect of the word of God, the preaching of the word of God.

Aren't there times when you hear a sermon and you think your pastor knows something about your personal life and he's talking right to you? I know your pastor. He doesn't know those things.

That's the Holy Spirit. That's the benefit of being in the church. And through God's servant, that pastor, he is stimulating you to love and good deeds by agitating and annoying you by speaking truth.

[9 : 48] That's how strong churches are built. We're spurring each other towards love and good deeds. And then the assembling of ourselves together, as I talked about, that word is referencing ecclesia.

When Christ announced church in Matthew 16, he used the word ecclesia, which in that time meant a regular physical gathering of people in a physical building.

It was like a city council meeting. The reference was ecclesia. The church is a physical gathering of people. It's not Zoom. It's not TV.

It's actually being in the room together. It's supernatural. And that's what we need. That's how we hold fast our confession. That's how we hold fast to the hope we've been given, is we fellowship together, we church together, if you will.

And then he references here, encouraging one another. That's admonishment, exhortation, cheering on, comfort, and training. That's what happens in the church.

[10 : 53] The personal benefit you and I experience by being in the church is immense, and you don't understand it until you don't get it anymore. And where I live, we experience that in a big way in 2020.

It is supernatural. And you and I are stimulated to love and good deeds, and if you have that hope for your children, for as they leave your home, what you want to build into them is an appreciation for what is the church.

It is not just a box you check off once a week to say, I did it, I've been obedient. It's a box they check off in anticipation of, I'm going to plan my life around next Sunday because I can't miss it.

I don't want to miss it. I need it. And that's a little bit different perspective sometimes than maybe we have on the church in the context of the family. That's what Moses was referencing in Deuteronomy 6, that you need that regular exposure to the teaching of the Word of God to remind us of who God is and what He's done, and therefore, what does He expect of us?

How then should we live? Okay? Now, if you flip over a couple pages to Hebrews 13, the title of our session is Leadership in the Church, and you may think, I'm going to talk about elders and deacons, and I am for a very short time, but I'm really going to talk to every single one of us.

[12 : 20] I think we have to understand how does God define leadership? And the context that He does it is really important, and He defines it in Hebrews 13, 7, by the way.

Very simple verse. Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you, and considering the results of their conduct, imitate their faith.

That is the definition of leadership in the church. Those who speak the Word of God and whose life is such that when you see the results of their conduct, you can imitate their faith.

Okay? What's the context? And the context of that makes this very, very powerful, and it is verses 1 through 6 of Hebrews 13. Hebrews 13, 1 through 6 has been called by some commentators one of the most concise and potent descriptions of Christian ethics anywhere in the Bible.

It covers the gamut of life as a believer in kind of a shotgun format. Shot, shot, shot, shot, shot, shot, shot, shot. Hebrews 13, 1 talks about our affections.

[13 : 35] Let the love of the brethren continue. Do you see that? Verse 2 talks about compassion. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. It's dealing with compassion and love for those you know and for those you don't know, for those you like and those you might be thinking you don't want to like.

Christian ethics. Verse 4, powerful, deals with marriage and sexual purity. Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled.

For fornicators and adulterers, God will judge. Verse 4 alone is a month of sermons. The meaning and impact of those two verses.

And then money and contentment in verse 5. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have. And then it talks about courage and the fear of man.

[14 : 45] He goes on to say, for he himself has said, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you. So that we confidently say, the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.

What will man do to me? Echoes of last night, isn't it? In Deuteronomy 6. That is a list that if you look at it, you think none of this flows.

He's not building an argument here. Right? It's just a list of this is what life should look like for a believer. What in the world do I do with that?

Verse 7. Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, who are teaching you, what do the first six verses mean?

How then? What does this look like? Marriage held in honor. What does that mean? Remember those who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.

[15 : 52] From a practical standpoint, the writer of Hebrews is saying that leadership in the church are those, just to pick on verse 4, who when you want to know what marriage looks like, what it should look like, you go to people who will tell you what the Bible says, and whose life is such that you can follow the pattern of their life.

So they can teach you what the Bible says about marriage, and you can watch them and see, there it is. There's an example. Does that make sense? That's leadership in the church.

It's a short but powerful description of normal Christianity in verses 1 through 6, and I say, short, it's simple, it's kind of clear, but is it easy to do?

No. Is it easy to understand? Not necessarily. Not when it comes to the practice of life. So let me turn this on you a little bit.

The measure of your spiritual leadership and my spiritual leadership in the church, or even in your home, at the end of days is not what office or what title you held.

[17 : 04] The measure of your leadership impact is whether you are a believer who made it easy for others in the church or under your care, your children, your family, to understand the Christian life by watching your life, by following your example.

And by following your example, we're drawn towards greater sanctification and glory to God. That's the measure of leadership. You want to know how to be a good dad?

When you boil it all down, there it is. Speak the word of God. Live what you teach. Powerful leadership. You want to be a good mom?

Speak the word of God and live what you teach. You want to be a good grandma, a good grandpa, granny and papa, as we're known in our family? We need to speak the word of God and in our relationship with each other, our relationship with our family, our relationship to the Lord, relationships in the church, being an example that our grandchildren can follow.

That's leadership. That's leadership in the church. That's leadership in the home. Leadership is saying, follow me as I follow Christ. And all of us must have, as our aspiration and practical reality at some point, a life that is an example that can be imitated, can be watched, can be followed.

[18 : 32] So the question then arises, some of you might legitimately be saying, I am not a leader.

Why am I here? Okay, I'm just not a leader. Can't tell you how many young men tell me that. I love when they say that because that tells me exactly what kind of work we have to do.

Who's the leader? Reference in Hebrews 13, 7. And who are the followers? I think that's a legitimate question at this point. So let's first of all identify who are the followers.

In that dynamic of leaders who are teaching us and being an example to us, who are the followers? And the answer to that is all of us.

We're all followers. We're all imitators. The world thinks we're strange because of that, by the way. The world teaches you, you don't want to be an imitator of anybody.

[19 : 35] You want to be unique. You want to be your own person. And yet the foundation and the fundamental and the fabric of the Christian life is that we're all called to be imitators. Your salvation involved a decision to follow.

Matthew 16, 24 says, Jesus said to the disciples, if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and what? Follow me.

Your sanctification, your Christian life is aided by the imitation of others, not just what we're seeing here, but in Ephesians 5, 1, it says, therefore be imitators of God. Philippians 3, 17, Paul says, brethren, join in following my example and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

That is an advocate for discipleship and accountability and getting wisdom. Echoes of Deuteronomy 6. It's all consistent.

1 Corinthians 11, 1, be imitators of me as I am of Christ. That's spiritual leadership. Do you hear Hebrews 13, 7 in that? Follow me as I follow Christ.

[20 : 49] The Bible also gives warning about imitating or following bad influences. 3 John 11 says, beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.

Which seems to indicate, it doesn't indicate, it says, that we're to pick carefully who our leaders are. We need to pick carefully whose life we're watching, who we're looking to imitate.

1 Corinthians 15, 33, you're familiar with this, bad company corrupts good morals. So biblical imitation is looking for godly examples and imitating them.

And just to be clear, this isn't a call to blend in and be a chameleon. You change colors according to whoever you're with or whoever you're near because you're supposed to be like everybody else.

That's not what this is saying. Biblical imitation is actively and carefully choosing influencers and then follow them as they follow Christ.

[21 : 54] The application obviously is your children are followers. You are a follower. Your children should know and maybe you have done this, but in your life you've had mentors, you've had people who have trained you, who you have followed, who you have tried to pattern your life after.

Have you ever told your children about those people? By doing that, you're training them that that is normal Christianity. And by the way, mom and dad don't fit the entire bill.

Mom and dad aren't the whole picture and that is the beauty of the church. If you've had children in the church, you know the dynamic that you can tell them until you're blue in the face something that is absolutely true and they're not hearing you.

And then they meet some cool 19-year-old at church who tells them the exact same thing and all of a sudden they have heard truth from heaven. Have you? And that frustrates some parents.

But you should relish that. You should love that. That is an example of the beauty of the fellowship of the church.

[23 : 12] So who are the imitators? You are. I am. Your children are. Your grandchildren are. And by the way, the social media industry is making billions on the understanding that everybody is an imitator.

Who makes the most money on social media? We call them what? Influencers. That's, the world understands this. We need to understand this in our family that they will look, your children will look for influencers.

The idea is who are they choosing to be that influence? So that brings us to the question who are the leaders? Who are the followers?

We all are. Who are the leaders? And I'll give you the end from the beginning. I'm an accountant so I'll just give you the bottom line. Okay? We're all supposed to be the leaders. And let's walk through that.

First of all, you have elders and deacons. There's three categories of leaders that the Bible talks about in the church. The first one is elders and deacons. And I'll talk about them briefly. These are formal offices in the church.

[24 : 20] You're probably familiar with these offices. Their qualifications are described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. And by the way, when you boil down the qualifications and function of formal leaders in the church, elders and deacons, guess what they boil down to?

Remember those who led you. They speak the word of God. And by watching the results of their conduct, you can imitate their faith.

You boil down 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, that's what it's saying. You find men who are exemplary in the church, who can teach the word of God and are gifted to teach the word of God and actually do.

And those are the men who you elevate into leadership in the church. So formal leadership in the church requires recognition and appointment by existing godly and biblical leadership.

And what they're looking for is proven character and knowledge of doctrine with the ability to communicate that biblical doctrine. That's what you want. That's what we want in our leaders because Hebrews 13, 7.

[25 : 34] So we're privileged to be in the church, to fellowship and to serve together, and to be under appointed spiritual leadership, biblical spiritual leadership. These leaders also have a specific role.

These elders and deacons have a specific role and responsibility. Hebrews 13, 17 puts it this way. This is what kind of elevates this to a little bit of a different level.

It says that they watch over your souls as those who will give an account. These are men who take on the responsibility for your souls.

That's a significant responsibility and a burden. And we can't miss the first few verses of Hebrews 13, 7 where it says to remember them. And a footnote, you need to remember them.

Recognize them. Pray for them. Thank the Lord for them. Thank them for them. And we've had an illustration this week of a man in significant spiritual leadership who fell and it should be a reminder to pray for your leaders that the Lord would guard and protect them as they guard and protect you.

[26 : 53] That's the first category. Elders and deacons. The second category in the Bible, who are the leaders? Leaders are elders and deacons. The second category is men.

Men. Yeah, every single one of you. There's a second group of people the Bible tells us are to lead through speaking the word of God and showing by their life how to live the Christian life without wavering.

And every Christian man in the church is to lead, to be a spiritual leader. A healthy, strong church is full of spiritually healthy, strong men.

And we don't have time to develop this all the way from Genesis 2, although we could, but men were created to lead. A young man who says, I'm not a leader, does not understand the very reason he was created by his creator, which was to lead.

Now, not every man is called to lead in the church as an elder. Not every man is created by God to be a leader in the government or to be the boss at work.

[28 : 04] That's not what we're saying. What we are saying, God created every man to be a spiritual leader in his home and for Christian men to be spiritual leaders in the church according to God's definition of leadership.

And notice in Hebrews 13, 7, it's not talking about titles. It's talking about quality of person. The leadership of a man in the home is a topic for another time, but what is it in the church?

One more time, remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the results of their conduct, you can imitate their faith. So why am I saying every man is a leader in the church?

Well, there's a verse you've probably heard of, you recognize, and that's 1 Corinthians 16, 13. I played football in my, well, decades ago now, and I almost don't remember it so long ago.

I can't tell you how many times the halftime rah-rah speech or the pregame speech, they'd bring in a youth director or a famous pastor, and they'd come in and talk to us about 1 Corinthians 16, 16, 13, to get us all fired up because it says, be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

[29 : 24] Sounds good for a football team, doesn't it? We want you, especially if you play on the offensive line, to be on the alert and stand firm because the quarterback doesn't want to get sacked.

You know, just crazy application of this verse. Some truth in there. Men are to be on the alert, to stand firm in the faith and to be strong, and they are to act like men.

No doubt about that. But when you look at 1 Corinthians 16, 13, that verse was not written to men. Who was it written to? It was written to the church at Corinth.

And what Paul is saying to the church at Corinth is, the men, the women, and the children. Everybody. That everyone is to be on the alert.

Everyone is to stand firm in the faith. That everyone is to be strong and that they should be able to look at the men and act like them.

[30 : 28] Do you see that? It's a remarkable truth. That Paul is telling the church at Corinth, he tells them a lot of things and he calls them a lot of names in 1 Corinthians.

It was a mess of a church. And what he's saying is, act like the men. In reverse, you consider that that is a tremendous responsibility on the men to act like men.

To speak the word of God and by virtue of their conduct be such that others can imitate their faith. 1 Corinthians 16, 13 is best understood in the dynamic of understanding the role of imitation in the church, in the Christian life, in being stimulated to love and good deeds.

The assumption, men, is that you and I are on the alert. We're protectors. We're standing firm in our faith, on our convictions. We're strong and courageous. That is convictions regardless of circumstances.

That we are being the man that God's created us to be, called us to be. So that the church can obey that command. You know, men, if we aren't what we need to be, the church can't do what they're commanded to do in 1 Corinthians 16, 13.

[31 : 53] This is not just the responsibility of the elders and the deacons or the Sunday school leaders or anybody with a title. This is you and this is me. Nothing flashy, no titles other than man.

We need to lead. If you're a man in the church, you have to be prepared and equipped to lead by example. You don't need a seminary degree and you don't need a title and the men that can do this and are doing this are all around us.

And my encouragement this morning is I'm talking to a couple churches that are very strong and I know that for a lot of reasons but one is is that there's a lot of men, good men, strong men, act like them.

Follow their lead and you begin to train your children to view church not just as a place where they go and get bored for an hour every week but that they need the church.

It's not just obedience, it's dependence and part of that is if you want to know how to live life speaking to a child of mine, I can tell you what I can tell you but you can watch it in all these other lives.

[33 : 14] Follow. Imitate. A man knows what he believes and he lives those convictions and he constantly informs those convictions with the word of God and he stands on those convictions regardless of circumstances.

That is biblically defined true manhood and this is what the church needs from us. This is why a solid core of good men can always be found in a solid church.

And let's not forget the first part of Hebrews 13. Remember those who lead. we should be thankful for the men in our churches, our church who are an example.

We should look for such men, take note, and follow them as they follow Christ. They may not be flashy, they may not be the popular ones or even very articulate.

This doesn't require a great level of articulation but they stand firm in the faith, they're strong and courageous and they hold fast their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ without wavering.

[34 : 26] Paul says to Corinth, I say to you, you should say to your children, follow them. Okay? So there's elders and deacons.

The second category is men. Ladies, who do you think is next? Yeah. It sounds like leadership in the church is all about men but the answer to that is no, it's not.

When you find a solid church, you'll find biblical, godly elders and deacons, you'll find good men, solid men and you'll also find significant biblical, spiritual leaders among the women.

Leadership, as defined by the Bible, again, you probably might have this verse memorized after you hear me say it this many times. But leadership is defined by the Bible which is speaking the word of God and showing the way with an exemplary life is not the exclusive domain of elders and deacons or men.

It's also the expectation of women. If you turn in your Bibles back a couple pages to Titus, Titus chapter 2 and you're probably familiar with this passage, Titus 2 talks about the dynamic between older women and younger women and it is completely parallel.

[35 : 49] I think you'll see this in construction to Hebrews 13, 7. Older women, verse 3 says, likewise, are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good.

And let me just stop there. Do you see it yet? Teaching the word of God is speaking the word of God. Right? And then the part of considering their conduct, he says, they are reverent, not gossips, not enslaved to wine.

That's leadership. That is a woman who is a leader in the church. And what happens with that?

Verse 4, again, another mirror of Hebrews 13, 7. So that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.

They are teachers. They speak the word of God. Who are they speaking the word of God to? Their children. How do they know how to do that? And what to say? They're learning it from who?

[37 : 13] The older women. You see, there's a handoff here. It's the beauty of the church. It's been true since Christ announced the coming of the church in Matthew 16.

It is true today, and it will be true until the Lord returns and raptures his people and takes us all to heaven, that we are all imitators, and we're all called to lead in whatever role that looks like.

And so, a woman, a mom, as she teaches her children, also needs to model for her children, and that is leadership in the church.

There's a chain of custody here. I talked about that last night. Moses talked about it through generational, that Moses was telling the people the same kind of thing you're going to hear your pastor tell you in church.

That's the place of the church, is to inform us so that we know how to speak the word of God, and then we are to turn around, and in Deuteronomy 6, you had the four generations, the parents, the children, and then the grandparents, or the grandchildren.

[38 : 23] Same here in the church. You may not have children. You may not have children at home. You may not be anywhere near your grandchildren, but the church is full of people who need your wisdom.

I should say that differently. They need the Lord's wisdom taught by you and modeled by you. And another footnote on Hebrews 13, 7, by the way, I want you to see the wording here.

It doesn't say what sometimes we want it to say. It says considering the results of their conduct, imitate their conduct.

Is that what it says? It says imitate their what? Their faith. We need to be really, really careful of saying, I had coffee with this older man today.

I'm trying to figure out how to parent my children and he said he did this and so I'm going to do exactly what he said he did. That's not what it's saying.

[39 : 33] In other words, we should be careful to learn principles and not legalistic methodologies. I'll say it this way.

I know men in our own men's group. We have a couple Wednesday nights. All the men get together and there's like 25 small groups or I guess it's up to 40 now, small groups that come out of that.

And what happens is there's a tendency for a small group leader to say, I get up every morning at 4 a.m. to read the Bible. And what happens is entire small group decides they all have to get up at 4 a.m.

and read the Bible. That's not what Hebrews 13.7 is saying. What it's saying is you hear that someone gets up at 4 a.m. to read the Bible. By the way, I wouldn't do that because I'm not coherent at 4 in the morning.

I'd rather read the Bible when I can focus my eyes and understand it. The principle though is that that man makes it a priority in his life to spend time in the Word of God.

[40 : 34] That's the principle. That's what you imitate. You understand? So as we imitate each other, it's not to have a church that all does life exactly the same way.

Okay? It's a church where there are people in the church who are leading the church by being an example of implementing biblical principles in their life.

Prioritizing what needs to be prioritized. Which is why what we're talking about this morning, it's not a program, it's not an agenda, it starts with a need, and the need is that we need to be imitators, and there is a curiosity.

Remember last night, the disciplines of learning, developing a curiosity. We need to be implanting in our children a curiosity that extends to how then shall I live, who can I go to for those kinds of answers.

others. And then the humility to acknowledge that they need help. It's the availability, what we're talking about is the availability and example of older men and older women in the church who faithfully and patiently speak the word of God and who by their conduct show how then a wife, a mom, a husband, a dad, an employee, whatever our roles in the world are, how to do those roles, how to live.

[42 : 11] So let's talk now briefly as we close a couple of commitments all of us could make to appropriately lead in the church. I don't know if you've absorbed that every single one of you are called to lead in the church.

Some of you more quietly than others but you benefit the church and we all need you to lead and you need me to lead.

It's what we come to church for and maybe we don't think about that a lot but we come to church to be annoyed towards love and good deeds, to be encouraged, to get help in holding fast.

And so church is an active involvement. It is not a passive enjoyment. We do love to sit down and to hear the teaching of the word of God and we do love to come and sing together but church is so much more than that.

And that's on all of us. And back in Hebrews 6 starting in verse 10, I'm going to read a couple verses here. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown towards his name in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

[43 : 33] And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end. There's that theme again. Verse 12, so that you will not be sluggish but imitators.

Of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. The first commitment we all need to make is to not be sluggish but be imitators. It is an active effort.

It is not passive. That's the distinction that the writer of Hebrews makes in Hebrews 6.12. There's a sluggishness as contrasted with imitation.

Come to church to be active. The verse contrasts sluggishness or dullness with the active radar up of imitation.

Imitation takes purposeful effort, diligent work. It produces a sharpening. And you know the Bible makes clear that you are to pick your friends, your influences.

[44 : 43] You don't let your friends pick you. We used to tell our daughters that all the time. Pick your friends. Don't let them pick you. And it's really easy. The kids that get into trouble are the ones that go to school and someone shows some interest in them and they're so happy they don't care they have a friend.

There's a discernment. You need to pick your influences. Choose wisely. So imitate. The second commitment obviously is to speak the word of God and to, by your conduct, give other people the basis to imitate your faith.

Boil it down. You need to lead. First commitment, imitate. Second commitment, lead. And the third commitment is remember. First part of Hebrews 13, 7.

Remember those who led you. It means to call to mind. And I know I've already said this, but it's a good way to end our time. It is good to be thankful. It is good to be, to express that thankfulness.

Not just to the Lord, although that is really important. And I wonder if you've ever done this or you've done this in a while, sit down and think through the people who have led you.

[46 : 00] Not the big names. You know, not the, the one, the names that everybody would recognize, although that's important. I've already talked about elders and, and pastors and deacons.

But the regular people who have modeled for you what the Christian life looks like, call them to mind.

Thank the Lord for them. And if you have the opportunity, thank them. I think this dynamic in the church would be much more vibrant if people understood, if you, if someone came to you and said, you don't know this, but I've been watching you and I've learned this and this and this from you, you would probably fall over, wouldn't you?

You, because so many of us have no idea. That's encouragement. That's Hebrews 10, 24. It's also accountability. That that dynamic that when people realize, wow, somebody was watching me, I wonder what else they saw.

I wonder if they saw all this other stuff. That's called accountability. And you know, the best form of gratitude is to imitate them. There's no question about that. But call them to mind.

[47 : 13] Remember, be thankful to the Lord and to them. Because their life matters. Their faithfulness to lead matters. And you're proof of that.

And then see that as an encouragement that you need to turn and return the favor. Not to them, but to pass it along. That is the dynamic of the church.

That is why I referenced last night that the church is so important to the function and the growth and the stability of the family. Again, not just obedience.

It's dependence. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the reminder from Hebrews of our need for the church.

Lord, as we look back at the role of the church in our life, the people who have gone before us, who have shown us the way, we are indeed grateful and we're thankful to you for that dynamic, for that gift.

[48 : 13] That you understanding as the head of the church that we would need those kinds of examples you've given them to us. Lord, we're grateful. We thank you for that.

We pray that we would be faithful to remember them, but also to turn around and to speak the word of God ourselves and to live a life, not just for ourselves, but for any of those under our care that we know about and so many that we don't, who are watching.

Lord, may we be faithful to that, not so that we would look good, but so that your kingdom would be advanced, your church strength, and our family strength. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.