

Hebrews 13:7, 17-19

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Date: 24 August 2014

Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 0 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. too innerly focused, too serious about Bible study, and not serious enough about loving the campus. The worship was dry. The teaching was intellectual. I could go on and on about all the things that were wrong. I had a laundry list of what could be done better. But you know, some of the people who served me and some of the people who I knew at that time, some of the people who led that ministry, are some of my lifelong friends today. And as I look back on that moment, I realize that the problem was not the ministry that I was a part of. The problem was my heart.

[2 : 3 2] And I know this not only because of that, but because I've seen it again and again and again in my own heart, I walk into something and my first reaction is to analyze and then criticize.

It is to think that I have the corner on how all things ought to be done well. And whoever's leading this ought to figure out that I'm their best asset. I so easily fall into a proud, independent, critical heart. In fact, one of the things that I've seen is that the more I care, the more easily I fall into it. Maybe this is like you as well. Through God's grace and through the grace of those leaders and many others whom I've served, I've been able to see this pattern in my heart. And again, I don't know if you this morning could connect with that at all, resonate with that at all. It's, I don't think it's surprising when I read the Bible, because when you go back to the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve, when you look at their heart towards God at the very beginning, what did they do?

They doubted God. They questioned His rules. They asked for independence from Him and the desire to make their life their own way, to follow their own path.

They didn't want to trust or obey God, but they had an independent, doubting, and proud heart. And friends, if that's true of humanity before God, the King of the universe, how much more is it likely to be ours in front of human leaders who are imperfect? How likely is it for our hearts to be like that?

We struggle to respond to leadership the way we ought to, particularly human spiritual leaders. What does this look like? It might look like it did for me, that critical heart. And you know, the crazy thing about it is we don't only just become critical, but we justify it. We see, well, no leader is perfect, so I get to sit in judgment of them. I get to tell them everything that's wrong with them all the time. We so internalize our independence that we think that we have the corner on truth, and then we live, we pursue a fundamentally independent course. I'm going to do my own thing.

[5 : 13] And there's a subtle version of this, which is, I will follow my leaders only as long as I understand them and are completely convinced by them. Or otherwise, I'm on my own. I'm not going to follow if I don't understand. You have to convince me for me to lead you. We reserve our freedom of independence. So that's one end of the spectrum. Then there's another end of the spectrum. The other end of the spectrum is the pastor can do no wrong. I don't know how many of you have grown up in this kind of context or lived in this kind of context, but pastor so-and-so can never be questioned. He never does anything wrong. He never thinks that there's any reason. There's this idolization of church leaders today. And friends, we have a unique opportunity to do that in our context because of the wonderful internet. Because you can go home and listen to the best preachers of the last hundred years. Maybe not quite a hundred, but you know what I mean. You can go home and listen to the best preachers. You can read a hundred church websites this afternoon and think about exactly how you think church ought to be done ideally. And it's so easy for us to think, this is the, the pastors can do no wrong. We have this ideal out there. And then we struggle when we come back and we look at, again, our own local church with its own warts and its own foibles and its own funny looking guys who wear three different things on Sunday morning. Are those really the pastors? What about the elders?

What is this church all about anyway? And in the middle of it, whether we fall into a critical heart or an unthinking idolization of our leaders, we find that, in fact, we're in places of weakness.

We're in places where it's actually hard to persevere in the Christian faith. Why do I say that? Well, let's turn to our passage this morning because our passage this morning talks about leaders in the midst of a much greater passage about perseverance. So Hebrews, we're almost at the end. For those of you who are just coming in, we have been preaching on Hebrews since last September. We are done. Next week, Greg is going to bring us home with a resounding chorus.

If you've made plans to go away for Labor Day, cancel them and come back to stay for it. It's worth it. But this is going to be the last two in our book, in our series on the book of Hebrews. Chapter 13 is where we are. We're going to be looking at verses 7 through 19 with a special attention on verse 7 and then verses 17 through 19. So let's read the passage. That's page 1009, by the way, in your pew Bibles.

Let's read the passage and then we'll pray and then we'll dive in together. Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings. For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods which have not benefited those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve in the tent, who serve the tent have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

[9 : 12] So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you this morning for the way you speak to us and the way you instruct us about how you have constructed your church. Lord, so that we might know you better.

Lord, we thank you for Jesus, who is the head of the church, who is the great shepherd, who has rescued us from sin by his death on the cross. Thank you that he is the one who has gone ahead of us. Lord, this morning I pray that we would see him and be encouraged this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. So we started talking about leaders and then I ended with perseverance and you might be wondering, why did we do that? Well, we did it because the writer of Hebrews did it. As we looked at this passage, if you were here last week, you heard Pastor Nick just beautifully unpack verses 8 through 16, so I'm not going to try to repeat all that's in there, but there's this, there's this odd thing that he throws into this, to this line of thought about leaders in verse 7 and verses 17 through 19. And it's in the broader context of the book of Hebrews, book of Hebrews, which has been to encourage the church to persevere in faith by seeing that Jesus is the supreme and the only one who can keep us and bring us to God. That there's no other way that we can actually draw near to God except for Jesus, who he is, what he has done for us. And this has been the argument of the whole book up until now.

And if you think that's what chapters 1 through 10 are functionally about, and then you get to chapter 12 and you get this climactic exhortation, therefore run the race set before you. Let's run the race of following Jesus as his people.

[12 : 38] And not just run the race by holding on and hoping we don't fall off, but run the race as people who have been won and captured by Jesus run as his people. And so he starts bringing in, in chapters 12 and 13, themes of holiness, themes of loving one another, themes of being a blessing to the world, themes of being those who worship God and then love others. And so there's a, there's a morality and a character that's meant to be a part of this running the race. And then we come to this very last climactic section, where in the middle of it, he's reminding us yet one more time, don't turn away to other teachings, don't turn away to other religious practices, thinking that they can give you what Jesus can give you. Only Jesus has offered the sacrifice that will deal with your sin and can enable you to stand before a holy God. So go to him, even outside the camp, bearing his reproach, bearing the shame that you may face in the world, but go to him and identify with him because he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

And then there are these verses about leadership. Why leadership? Well, it's because I'm convinced that what the writer of the Hebrews wants us to see is that God has given the gift of leadership to his church so that those leaders will enable and empower and guide the church body as a whole in persevering and holding fast to Jesus. This is why leaders are inserted into this argument, because God has given leaders as a gift. And so that's what we're going to look at this morning.

And when we see leaders as a gift, we see that we don't have to be overcritical of them, nor do we need to idolize them, but we need to see them as coming from God, playing the role that God has appointed for them, and then playing the role that we as followers are meant to have. So let's look at these things together. First, what has God given leaders to do, or what are leaders supposed to look like? And then secondly, what does it look like to follow these leaders, receiving them as a gift from God? What are God-given leaders? Well, the first thing that I want you to see is there are a couple of preliminary statements I want to make just to give you some orientation, particularly some of you who are new to our church. We are a church that's led by elders, a plurality of elders. We believe it's the biblical model for it, and we think that this passage is primarily about elders. When you look at verse 17, they are those who are responsible for the care of your souls as one who have to give an account. This describes the elders in a church as we see it. Elders are a group of men who love you, who pray for you, who teach you. We're going to see about all the things that this passage tells us that we're meant to do. But we have this church because we believe that that's the way God has structured it for us to care for you. It may also have a good application beyond just the elders.

There are many who lead others in the church. You can see it in Titus 2, where older men serving younger men, and that's not just chronological. That's in wisdom and maturity in the Lord.

So we see that there are other places and other ways in which leadership is exercised. The primary application here is elders, but we think there's an overflow for many of us who may take different roles in the church. The second thing I want you to see as a preamble is that that description at the end of verse 17, or in the middle of verse 17, is those who have to give an account, leaders are not the head of the church. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. First Peter reminds us that Jesus is the great shepherd of the sheep, and that leaders are men who stand first and foremost as accountable to God for their leadership in the church. And what that means is that they have no place to be an overlord.

[17 : 27] They have no place to wield their authority in a heavy-handed way. This is what leaders are meant. It requires us to have humility because we realize this church isn't about us. It's about Jesus.

Always has been. Always will be. And woe be to the leader that makes the church about himself and doesn't point people to Christ. We also see in the pattern of Scripture that leaders are not above accountability. There is an appropriate place to recognize that leaders can and have abused their authority in the past, and there is an appropriate way to address that.

There is a danger of leaders who are unaccountable and proud. And I want to acknowledge that because the rest of our message this morning is going to be about following and leading and valuing leaders for doing what they're called to do by God. But I want to recognize that a proud, unaccountable leader is to be opposed. They are not given by God in that hardness of heart.

But God-given leaders are a blessing. What do they look like? Let's look at it. Let's look at the passage. I want you to see three things that you should expect as a congregation from your leaders.

This may be really corny, but what's your basic need? Food, shelter, and clothing. They're meant to feed you with the Word of God. They're meant to clothe themselves with the character of Christ, and they're meant to shelter you by their loving care for your soul. That may stick. You may forget it, but there it is. So first of all, to feed you with the Word of God. Look at verse 7. Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you, the Word of God. And when you look at the flow, if you look down in verse 9, he's contrasting that with, in verse 9, other teachers who may have strange and diverse teachings. How do we know what's good and what's bad? Here's a really simple way. Look at verse 8.

[19 : 47] The way you know that they're teaching you the Word of God is because they are pointing you to Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. That their teaching is going to exalt the person of Christ. Their teaching is going to see as precious the work of Christ. That their teaching is going to point you to faithful obedience and submission to Christ. Not opinions. Not, I think, it would be nice if. But good leaders are going to point you through the Word to Jesus Christ over and over and over again. This is what it means to have a pattern of sound teaching.

And this is why leaders are going to be inherently teachers. Because the way we know about Jesus primarily is through this book. And so your leaders should be people that you should look to to teach you, to open the Bible again and again and again. Whether it's an esoteric, philosophical, theological question you have. Or whether it's a dramatic crisis of your life that you think the Bible has nothing to say to. Your leaders should be able to open the Word and say, look, Jesus is here with you in the middle of it. And to give you instruction and to give you counsel based on the Word of God to help you persevere in faith, to help you understand who Jesus is. Not only are they to feed you with the Word of God, but they are to have a character of life worth imitating. You see it, the second phrase in verse 7.

Consider the outcome of their way of life. What he's talking about here is, look at the people. It's likely that this is talking about leaders who have already died, although I don't think it has to be only those.

Saying, look at the sum total of their life. And when you see the sum total of your life, what should you see? Jesus Christ soaked in them and through them. The character of Jesus exemplified in their humility, in their kindness, in their gentleness, in their patience, in their strength, in their willingness to confront evil, in their love, and in their sacrificial giving for the sake of others.

These are the character qualities. Look in Titus and Timothy for the characteristics of an elder. Look for leaders who were like that. That is what they should be like.

[22 : 29] And friends, one of the things that the writer of the Hebrews is emphasizing here, consider the outcome of their way of life. They have finished through the end in persevering in faith. So they should be leaders who are continuing in believing in and trusting in Christ, even to the point of facing persecution, even to great sacrifice to themselves, even to the loss of their lives, even. These are the kinds of leaders you should be looking for, that those who are willing to be like Christ in laying down their life for the gospel. Thirdly, they're meant to watch over your souls. Look with me down in verse 17.

They are keeping watch over your souls. Keeping watch is a great phrase. In the original, it actually is having sleepless nights over the condition of your soul. And I can tell you, we do. As the leaders of your church, we have sleepless nights over the condition of your soul. Our job is to watch out for you, to help you, to encourage you, to help you, to encourage you. Maybe even to rebuke you, to call you to account. Brother, sister, this is what the Word of God says. Brother, sister, this is who Jesus is for you right now. Don't forsake Him. There's nothing else worth forsaking Him for. And so leaders are called to shepherd you by watching out for your soul. They're to remind you, for those of you who've been here all year, Hebrews chapter 6, they're to remind you that Jesus has gone ahead into the heavens. And He has placed there an anchor for your soul. For all in Christ, there's an anchor for their soul in the heavens because Jesus has gone ahead and put it there. And therefore, all of our care for your soul is for you to live out of that glorious truth, that when you're in Christ, you're secure.

And no matter what you're facing, no matter what doubts you have, no matter what else is tantalizing you to perhaps think that something else might be better, our job is to remind you that no, all those things are actually a cancer and a poison to your soul. But Jesus is the one who will keep your soul to the end. I've been blessed to have leaders like this in my life. I told you a little about my beginning of my freshman year. Through the four years that I was in college, three couples over those four years invested their lives in me. They brought me into their home. They taught me the Word of God. They took me on missions trips to the far ends of the world. They lived out what Paul describes in Philippians to share not only the gospel, but their very lives. They did that with me. And coming from a home that didn't have a lot of Christ-centered patterns in it, I learned a ton. Not just about the Bible and theology, but I learned about how to live. I learned about having a family and a marriage long before I had either. I learned about faithfulness and perseverance through trials. As I saw these couples weather all sorts of different challenges, as I had them share with me their lives, and as they spoke into mine, my foolish, hot-headed, it didn't stop quickly. It really didn't. And they persevered in loving me.

I'm so glad that they loved me enough to have the kind of care for my soul that they did. Friends, I hope that you've had that experience, and I hope if you don't, or if you haven't, that you will here in this church. It is our desire to shepherd you in that way.

Application. How do you respond to leaders like this? What should it, or how do you pursue connecting with that kind of shepherding care for your soul? Here are a couple of things. One, become a member.

[27 : 22] This is not because we want to increase our tribal numbers, but this is because when you identify yourself as a member of our church, it gives, it then gives us a weight of responsibility and a care for your soul. And so, become a member so that we know that you want us to shepherd you, and so that we will know that we are responsible for shepherding you. Secondly, seek out the teaching.

Friends, we have 200 plus people here. There's a great Sunday school class that happens at 9 o'clock every Sunday morning. The elders oversee it and teach a lot of it. Make it a plan to go and sit under their teaching. Make it a plan to take in more from your leaders as they point you to Christ.

Thirdly, open your life to us. Every once in a while, as a leader in this church, I get this weird sense of, oh, the pastor's here. I got to put on my church self so I can be okay. I understand that.

It's normal. We all do it. But listen, friends, part of our ability to shepherd your soul is to engage with you in real life. We want you to come into our lives. We want to be a part of your lives.

So, don't think it's an imposition, and don't think that you have to perform for us. But let us into your lives. Final word about this from one of my seminary professors.

[29 : 08] I'm thinking about this passage. What are leaders to be? They're to be biblically-based teachers who will bring you back again and again and again and again and again to Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So, that's what you should look for. That's what you should hold us as leaders accountable to. What about you? It's actually interesting that the writer of Hebrews is writing mostly to the congregation, not to the leaders. We as leaders need to take all that I've just said as a call, as a mandate, as a responsibility. But for the congregation, how do we respond?

What then? How are we to respond? There are three things here as well. My son's heading off to kindergarten next week, and it seems like these are pretty basic things. Pay attention, follow the leader, and pray. So, how are we to respond to our leadership? First thing, pay attention. Look with me in verse 7. There are three different words that talk about paying attention. One is remembering. That is, bring to mind, consciously think about your leaders. And then second one, consider. That is, not just sort of go, oh, I wonder if, but consider as in, take stock of, think through, think about their way of life, and then thirdly, imitate them. Right? When Eli wants to know how to tie his shoe, and I bend down, and I say, well, you take this, and you make the loop, and you take the rabbit around the tree, and he's suddenly, you know, watching the bird in the trees or whatever. What am I going to say? I'm going to say, pay attention, because you're not going to get what you want if you're not paying attention. You can't imitate me if you don't see what I'm doing.

And so we are called to pay attention to our leaders. Pay attention to their teaching. Pay attention to their way of life. Here's some questions that might help you to think about how to pay attention. How do they respond to the Word of God?

Is it precious to them? Do they submit to it? Do they treat it with honor and respect? Do they see it as a treasure? How do they respond when they're shown their own sinfulness? With humble, repentant faith?

[32 : 03] Or with proud defensiveness? How do they treat others? And particularly, I'm going to put this in there. How do they treat people who can't do anything for them?

How do they treat their families? How do they respond to personal disappointment or tragedies?

How do they show great faith even when there's a great risk or a great cost involved? In their pattern of life or in the decisions that they're making?

I'm sure there are other good questions to ask. But if you start to think about those questions as, how do my leaders do this? Could be really helpful for you to pay attention.

So, first thing is pay attention. Second thing is follow the leader. This is what we see in verse 17. Obey and submit. Just, we have a really big problem in our culture today about obeying and submitting because we're a democracy and we all think we have individual rights and obeying and submitting isn't a big deal for us.

[33 : 21] It's a wonderful fruit of the enlightenment gone wrong. And what I want you to see is that there are other passages in Scripture where obeying and submitting are very clearly and very strongly taught.

And they're an important part of the Scriptures. The reality that God has instituted authorities over us in various different places. But here this morning, these words aren't actually those really strong words.

Let me retranslate the beginning of verse 17 to you in a different way. Trust in the guidance of your leaders and yield to their direction in your life.

Does that help? Does that help you think through? How are you supposed to respond to your leaders? To trust in their guidance. Let them point you again and again.

If you have a question, don't think, well, what in my best wisdom can I do with this all on my own? But go to your leaders if you're struggling with it and say, hey, what does God's Word have to say about this?

[34 : 35] And then trust them. Look for them to give you something. And then when they teach you, yield to it. Out of God's Word in a Christ-centered way, let them guide you.

Trust that they are a gift from God. Don't let the teaching that happens from your leaders simply tickle your mind.

Or some of you are going to be in, some of you have been in university for a while now. Do you know that when you get into section, a small group discussion, what are you doing?

You're like grasping for something so that you can make some meaningful contribution so that you can look really impressive, right? I mean, that's basically what small group sections are like in university, right?

Don't do that at church. Don't feel like that's your role in small group. Come instead saying, what does God's Word have to say to us? Allow your leaders to direct you in this.

[35 : 42] And I don't mean in an unthinking way. Ask good questions. Ask questions because you really want to know the answer for the feeding of your soul and for the strengthening of your faith.

But let them lead you and let them guide you through the Word of God. The picture, as I see it here, is one of cooperation and trust.

There's a fascinating article this week about LaShawn McCoy, who's a running back for the Philadelphia Eagles, and his new coach, Chip Kelly, who came in from college, and he had all these crazy new metrics and different ways of running the team and trying to actually get the athletes to think about running their lives differently so that they could be better athletes.

And his first response was, this guy's crazy. I'll show up. I'll work hard at practice. But I'm not buying into the rest of this. And the coach said, well, you can do that, but you're not going to play.

And so the coach pulled the authority card and said, I'm the authority and you need to follow me. But you know what happened? He also said, give me a chance. Do everything I tell you and see what happens.

[37 : 02] And LaShawn McCoy, two months later, was getting 10 hours of sleep a night. And he stopped eating fast food. And on and on and on. He changed his whole manner of life because he was convinced that this coach had his best in mind.

And it said near the end, I would do anything Coach Kelly tells me to now. Because there was a partnership and a cooperation between a leader who has authority and a responsibility to lead and followers who are saying, please lead me.

I trust you. I think you are a gift from me. A gift to me. And I want you to lead me. And this is the picture that I see here.

As we're running the race that God has called us to, it is meant to be a partnership. The leadership is responsible for providing that leadership of pointing you to Christ through their teaching and through their lives and through their shepherding of your souls.

And your responsibility is to be a part of the team. Don't be a bystander. Don't stand on the sidelines. Don't sit there and wait. Well, I wish someone would come and help me. Get involved.

[38 : 12] Seek it out. Engage with the life of this church and with its leadership so that you can persevere. Even when you don't always agree.

This is the hard part, isn't it? Right? Well, I don't like the way they struggled it. Why can't we do it this way? And you know what? Let me say this. We invite constructive ideas and constructive dialogue.

We believe that we don't have the corner on every good idea for this church. So we want you to engage with us. But we also, at the end of the day, want you to trust us.

That if we say, you know what? That's a great idea. But this is how we thought about it. And these are the reasons why from the word. And this is why we want to build the church in this particular way. We hope that you will trust us.

And you know what? Even if you can't trust us, trust God. That God has put us as fallible leaders over you. Recognize that God has meant us to be this team with different roles.

[39 : 24] So that we can pursue Christ together. And you know, when you do this, this is the end of verse 17. It will be a joy. It will be a joy for us to lead and not groaning.

When we have this sense of partnership and this sense of being in it together, running this race and following Jesus, it's great joy to lead. What a good thing.

The third thing. Pay attention, follow the leader, and pray. This is what we see in verses 18 and 19. Pray. Pray for us.

Oh, church, pray for us. This is not an optional thing. We need you to pray for us as the leaders of this church.

We need you to be taking us before the throne of God regularly. We need you to pray for us when you're mad at us.

[40 : 26] We need you to pray for us when you're disappointed in us. We need you to pray for us when you want to and when you don't.

Pray for us. Pray for our teaching. That we would be full of Christ. Pray for our relationships and our families and our marriages.

That Christ would be the center of all of them. Pray for us. Pray for us. Pray for us. Pray that we would lead as under-shepherds. That we would always be leading as we stand before our great shepherd.

Pray for us that we would be following Him every day. Pray for our church.

Friends, God gave us leaders so that we will persevere in faith. Pray for us that we can play the role that God intends for us as your leaders to play.

[41 : 32] And see that this is God's great gift to the church. That as we do this together in partnership, playing the roles that God has given us to play, that we can persevere and not give up.

That we will be able to fix our eyes on Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. Because you know what? As I started, I want to end. Jesus is the head of this church. Jesus is the one for whom all of this exists.

Listen to some of the words that the writer of the Hebrews has said. Because He is the great leader. He is the captain who is leading the charge. He is the vanguard of the kingdom of God.

He is the Davidic king who will shepherd His people the way that Ezekiel prophesied long ago in the passage we read earlier. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews says about what Jesus has done.

For it is fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

[42 : 44] Jesus is the founder of our salvation. And how did He do it? He suffered. Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus the apostle, the forerunner, the captain, and high priest of our confession.

Since then, we have such a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Let us hold fast to our confession. Describing Jesus in chapter 5, And He, being made perfect, became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

Chapter 6, verses 19 and 20, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

And finally, chapter 12, verse 2, Let us run with endurance the race set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder, that is, the one who has done all to lay the basis for it.

He has done all that we need for our salvation, the founder of it, but not only that, but the perfecter of it. He will take us on this race all the way across the finish line to heaven and to glory and to a city whose glory will not end and to a home that will last forever and to the safety and security and glory and joy of being with God forever.

[44 : 31] The founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Friends, this is it. In the encouragement to persevere that the writer of Hebrews has been giving us, this is how we can do it. Follow your leaders because they're meant to point you to Christ because Christ has walked the hardest road.

Christ has walked through the hardest suffering and the worst persecution ever. He went to the cross to die for us, to rescue us, to purchase us, to make us His own.

He is ultimately our great leader. God has given the church the gift of leaders so that we might know this great leader more and more.

And as we do that, we might persevere in faith and bring Him glory and honor in all that we do. Let's pray. Jesus, You are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

[45 : 53] God, we thank You that You have given the church leaders. God, we pray for the leaders in this church that You would, Lord, enable us, Lord, to fulfill all of these responsibilities, to teach and to shepherd, to live lives worthy of imitating.

Lord, we pray that You would make us Christ-soaked people. Lord, we pray for our church. Lord, we pray that we would follow the leaders that God has given us.

Lord, we pray that You would create in us a sweet partnership of encouraging and exhorting and teaching and instructing and modeling, persevering in faith, clinging to Jesus, that we together would go to Jesus outside the camp bearing His reproach because we know that with Him, Lord, there is a city yet to come that will be for us a home forever.

We can persevere in faith through the worst trials because we know that He has already run the race and He will bring us home. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. So worship team comes up. We're going to sing again a response song.

[47 : 26] This is a song that is calling the church to stand up and to follow Jesus, our captain. So please stand as we sing together.