

# Rules of Engagement

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 26 January 2025

Preacher: John Lowrie

[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me, please, to Exodus chapter 17, Exodus 17. Yeah, I will certainly miss you guys. It's been great really working with you, getting to know you.

I think this is the cheeriest church I've ever pastored. I always associate this church with laughter. I must confess, I've had such a laugh pastoring here. Normally it's doom and gloom and you just hold on with your fingertips.

It's been such good fun. And the elders' meetings have been great. You've got two good elders. It was always a joy. It was never a burden to go to the elders' meeting and join McIntyre as well. It was such a blessing. And it's great to see, as Paul mentioned, Blackpool. We had a great time in Blackpool. I really enjoyed that. I'll certainly miss that going forward. Really well traveling, doing FIC type stuff as well.

That would have been great. We won't see you stuck. We'll never see you stuck. I mean, once I get a break for a few months, if I can do anything to help, I'll always help you in any way, unless I'm busy somewhere else doing whatever.

[ 1 : 01 ] But if I've got time, you will get time. We will help you as best we can moving forward. But I pray the Lord will bless you. I'm sure I have no doubt. He never brought us here to take us away to cause you to crumble.

He will lead and he will guide. That is for sure. And I pray that, as I was talking about laughter, that I remember thinking, I was reading the Genesis narratives with Isaac and the promise when God comes to Abraham and to Sarah, and they laugh as if to say, really?

I'm going to have a son. My body's as good as dead. And you have to call your son laughter. And then when the baby's born, I think it's Sarah that says, people will see this and laugh.

They'll just laugh and think, wow, look at what God has done. And I pray that the Lord will cause you to laugh in that way. That the Lord will really do all work among you. That you'll just be blown away and think, wow, look at what God has done.

He is a great God. And I pray the Lord will lead and guide. Anyway, I'm going to read Exodus, part of Exodus 17. I mentioned to you that if you inducted me yesterday to be your full permanent pastor, I would have preached on this today as your permanent pastor.

[ 2 : 14 ] I'm preaching on this because one of the frustrations that I've had in this role, it's been great. It's been a great role. I think I said right at the start to the elders, I love doing this.

And I'm glad I don't have the responsibility. I'm passing through in that sense. I am. My remit was to hold the fort, really. And I didn't want to weary you by saying, we need to do this, this, this, and this. And then the next guy comes and you're on your knees. You're weary. So I was conscious not to do this, but to be involved in feeding you, encouraging you through God's word, and at the same time visiting folk and what have you.

It was that. It wasn't to lead you forward. The passage that I'm going to preach to you this morning is very much leadership. And so I'm going to lead. I'm going to take away, do away with my pastoral care kind of hat and put on the hat that I've not had for the past two years and try and lead you as best I can with the principles that we see in this passage.

So let's read this together. It's Exodus 17. The people have been grumbling again. And at the start, water from the rock. And Moses strikes us. Not the striking that excludes them from the promised land, but they are being provided for.

[ 3 : 28 ] But then you have this battle. And this is what I want to look at. Verse 8 from Exodus 17. The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites.

Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands. So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning. But whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it.

Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, one on the other, so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

We'll end our reading at a very well-known portion of God's Word. Let's ask for God's help to understand this together. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for the way in which, Lord, is a church you have led and guided us over the past two years, for the way in which you have knit our hearts together in love and in gospel ministry.

[ 4 : 45 ] And Father, I come, Lord, as the minister of your Word, Lord, charged with preaching the Word of God and not just my own thoughts. So Father, I pray, Lord, if there be something that is said this morning, Lord, that is true to your Word.

I very much pray, Lord, that your people would take this to heart and perhaps remember these things going forward. If it's not true, Lord, and it's been the imagination of my own heart, Lord, I pray that that would die and be quickly forgotten.

So Father, we are in your presence this morning. We pray very much for your leading and for your guiding. Lord, speak to us now from your Word, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. I'm sure you'll recognize this image. This is, if it comes up, this is Wester Hills, the area, part of the area.

This is your parish. This is your mission field where you try to reach out with the gospel. But it's not just a place. It's a place without a shepherd.

[ 5 : 50 ] They are sheep without a shepherd. That should always be the thing that really touches your heart. They're not just sinners who have rebelled against God. They are clueless. They really need a shepherd.

And that's who they are. And this is your parish, maybe that side of the road and all of this area. I don't know if you've ever, I've never spoken to them, whether you've clearly marked it out. You don't go across that road.

But you basically reach out to the people of Wester Hills. You have a great commission. Your great commission is to make disciples. It's not just to preach the gospel, but those who are converted. You are to make them spiritually mature in the Lord. People who resemble Christ, like the pencil that Lucille was telling us about. And that is our great commission. Jesus says, And he tells us what a disciple is, teaching them to obey.

That is our desire, that the people here who do not know God, know God, and that they will ultimately obey. And he says, surely I am with you to the end of the age.

[ 7 : 02 ] That is at the commission of Wester Hills Baptist Church, of every church. And really that's what you're doing. It's very clear. Make disciples, spiritually mature followers of Christ.

Now, how do we go about this? That is not easy. Believe you me, it is very difficult to understand the area in which you minister, to understand the nature of the people, the troops that you have to work with.

There are many books on church growth, how to grow a church, how to revive a church, on evangelistic strategies, on leadership skills. I have these. I got rid of a lot of other books, but I've kept all these type of books.

I just wish, in that sense, I was still here to begin to show you some of those things. But those, and many of them are good. Many of them are helpful, especially those who rely on biblical principles. There are patterns in the Bible. The Bible is not just made up of stories. There are principles. There are patterns. In it, we see how God works. And when we understand how God's worked, we can buy into his program.

[ 8 : 08 ] It was interesting, the lady shared with us one of the books based on Acts 2.42. If there was a graph or a pie chart showing the verses that I had preached over 30 years, not preached, but quoted from, Acts 2.42 would be by far the biggest, even more than John 3.16.

My job is to try and motivate the people to remind you of how a church grows. The early church devoted themselves. And I think it was Kimmy that mentioned what that meant.

It's not just worked hard. It's working hard with your heart. You love the gospel. You love the Lord. You love his people. You love the people here. Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the breaking of bread, to fellowship, and to prayer.

Any church that devotes themselves to those four things, I firmly believe, and I've seen from experience, the Lord will add to that church those who are being saved. And it's the devoting themselves to that.

Churches really need to buy into this, and that's what happened in the early church. But I've chosen this passage because it's not just Acts 2.42. In this, you see a pattern of principles and how God works.

[ 9 : 21 ] They are very simple. And that's why I want to just leave you three things, three points to take away. And you might remember me through these or through shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.

So I've chosen this because of the pattern, the principles that we see here. So I'm just going to preach for very long this morning. I just want to mention three things.

You know this passage very well. This is the account where Moses, I love this image, where Aaron and her are holding up his hands and so forth. How was this battle won at this time?

Three things. And these are the principles to adopt going forward. First of all, supplication. They all begin with S. So supplication.

You know that means prayer. We've looked at this when we looked at adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, prayer. And there is a danger in gospel ministry.

[ 10 : 20 ] There's a danger in church revitalization. There's a danger in thinking, we can do this ourselves. Small churches tend not to do that. Big churches tend to do that.

They have their dry ice machine and strobe lighting, and they're going to do it. I mean, I've been part of a couple of big churches. I remember one saying, the elder saying, we are Premier League. That was one quote. The other quote was, if we can't do it, nobody can do it. And I thought, wow. I was waiting on a bolt of lightning coming down and striking this person.

We are Premier League. We can do this. Small churches never say that. Small churches is, woe is me. I don't know if you've still got the Vauxhall Conference League or whatever. You're really in the minions.

You're a pub team when it comes to that. You think, you don't talk like that. You think, how are we going to put 11 players on the park? It is not easy. And this is a major thing.

[ 11 : 18 ] Most of the books you get on church planting, they come from the States. And they appear as a silver bullet. This is the book. It could be the Trellis and the Vine or something. Books that are current, that all pastors read.

We get them at conference. This is the book for you. And you read this and you think, if I just put these things into place, it will happen. It is not as simple as that. It never is.

And there is no, do this and this will just happen. If we are to grow as a church, it will require humility.

And one evidence of humility is we look to God. We approach Him. Jesus says, I am the vine. You in Westerhales are the branches. If a man remains in me or a church remains in me and I in him, they will bear much fruit.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. And then it's good to reaffirm that, that size doesn't matter. But it's this attitude of, Lord, we need your help.

[ 12 : 20 ] We left to ourselves, we can do nothing. We need humility. We need to recognize that weakness is actually a strength. That is taught in the Scriptures very plainly.

Paul says, or it was said to Paul by the Lord, My grace is sufficient for you. It's enough for you. My power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast, Paul says, all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

For when I am weak, then I am strong. Weakness is not to be shunned. It's to be embraced, because it's then we turn to the Lord.

But here we see, in this passage, there is success in this battle. But its success doesn't depend mostly on Moses, Joshua, Aaron, or her.

The ultimate success in this battle is down to the Lord. Without the Lord, they would have lost this battle. They are not Premier League. Look at us, Lord. Watch what we can do.

[ 13 : 23 ] They sought the Lord. And we see that the victory is won in this area through power and through prayer. Prayer is power.

But here we see in this, they needed the power of God. And the power of God is mentioned in this in the shape of the staff of God.

It's not just, it's unfortunate in this picture, or you don't actually see the staff of God in Moses' hands. But the staff of God in this is so, so important.

We are told in verse 9, Choose some of the men, go and fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on the hill with the staff of God in my hands. And as long as he held up his hands with his staff in it, they were winning.

As long as they lowered the staff, they were losing. As long as the staff's above their head, the superiority of God, God's power is seen.

[ 14 : 19 ] Now, the staff very much symbolized the power of God. And we see this in Egypt, in Exodus 4, earlier on in this book, where God actually tells Moses, Take this staff in your hand so that you can perform the signs with it.

It symbolized the power of God. It's a great thing to have in those days, the power of God, the staff of God. It symbolized God's power. Today we don't need a staff.

You don't need a pastor that's going to come with the staff of God, and he'll just stand every Sunday and do this, and you'll just make great inroads into the community and your love for each other.

The power that we have is in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. All power has been given to me, therefore go. He has given this church great power.

He has never left you, nor will he ever leave you. As an individual, but as a church. He says, All power, all authority is given to me, Westerhales.

[ 15 : 22 ] Therefore, based on that, go and make disciples. You're not moving from a strength of weakness to power. You're moving from the position of power that you have in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. And this is that we need to embrace. Now, how do we access this power?

We access this power through prayer, through supplication. And Moses' practice, you remember, was to lift his hands. It's what he did in prayer.

It was very symbolic of him praying. And you remember in Exodus 9, a few chapters before this, when the plagues were coming, and Moses was told, We've had enough of this.

Go out. So you read these words. Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go. You don't have to stay any longer, Pharaoh says. Moses replied, When I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to the Lord.

[ 16 : 26 ] The thunder will stop, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord's. Then Moses left Pharaoh, went out of the city. He spread out his hands toward the Lord.

The thunder and hail stopped. The rain no longer poured down on the land. Therefore, to be successful as a church, we need to seek the power of God through prayer.

It's as clear as that. It's as simple as that. It's not a great deep truth, but it's a very, very important truth. If there's one point I do not need to labor in this church, it is this point.

You've been probably one of the most prayerful churches that I've ever pastored. I've been in some churches where I don't know what would make them pray. They just didn't pray.

I've been in one church. They had a reputation, inside and outside the church, for not praying. I even challenged them after about five or six years. You need to pray. And still, they wouldn't meet.

[ 17 : 27 ] The prayer meetings were a desert. They just didn't pray. You pray on a Monday. You pray for each other. You pray in the church. You know the importance of prayer, the importance of corporate prayer.

Nothing will be achieved in this church. You can have the best pastor in the world come here. But if you don't pray, you will fail. Fail miserably. I wonder if you really buy into that.

And I wonder if you're involved in corporate prayer in the church. It's great that you have a quiet time. But every member of a church, I believe everybody should be a member, which reminds me, I probably won't resign my membership right away.

I'll keep it open for a few months. I don't believe in resigning memberships. Every Christian should be a member of a church. When you leave a church, you transfer your membership. So we will try

and transfer to another church.

But until that time, after maybe a month or two, you have to get a quorum. I recognize it's messy, but we'll try and do that. So you'll need to prize my membership out my dead fingers for the next couple of months.

[18:28] It means you're still past responsible for Lucille and I. How he's doing, where he's going to be settled in, causes us to focus. I've had members leave churches and drift and just wander. And it's not good.

They say they're going to join a church. Two years later, they've still never joined a church. And before their marriage, hits the buffers. It's not good. It's always good that you're part of a church where you're cared for, but where you're held accountable.

So there's that. But you know this. You know the importance of prayer. You do this. Corporate prayer is essential.

Are you involved in this? Meeting with brothers and sisters. Don't just leave the burden to them. You just pray for the ministry. I'm just praying that I catch the number 44 tomorrow.

Have bigger vision. Be involved in the battle. Be involved in prayer. There's no shortcut for this. Churches need to pray corporately. So that's the first thing.

[19:26] Second thing is strategy. Prayer was not the only thing that won this battle. It is important to buy into that. Prayer is not enough.

I'll say that again. Prayer is not enough. There needs to be strategy. In this passage, you're introduced to Joshua for the first time. Joshua now appears.

Joshua will take over from Moses. He's a very important leader. And this is the first time that we encounter him. We don't know anything about Joshua at this time.

We know that he's not anything great. The Lord has to come to him and call him and tell him to be brave and courageous and so forth. But the only thing we know in this passage, he's a first-rate swordsman.

He's good in battle. He's gifting. It's what he's like. And Moses knew that victory would not be achieved by just him standing there, lifting up his hand.

[20:23] We have to buy into this. He has to fight the battle. I'm sure if it was me, I'd say, nah, I'd rather you just stay up there. Moses, that's good.

You've got a couple of good guys. They can keep you. You've got the staff of God. That's all you need. But it's never the case. And it's the same in the whole of the Old Testament. Apart from one or two where the Lord says, you don't need to fight this battle.

I'll do it. Even in those cases, they still have to go out and face the army. He doesn't say, you just sit on the sofa and just pray. That will be enough. They have to go out and they have to fight the battle. And notice how this is worded in verse 9. Moses said to Joshua, choose some of our men and go out and fight the Amalekites. Now, the NIV, that's the version I'm reading from.

That is misleading. The impression you're given the way that's worded, choose some men. In other words, there's a big army. Choose a couple of guys. Go and sort these guys out.

[21:20] Would you just pick? The army's already there. Just pick a couple of guys. It might even be a few thousand. But go there. But the actual wording of this, the text literally says, choose men.

Not choose some men, but choose men. The ESV says, choose for us men. That's a better translation. Choose for us men. In other words, Joshua had the challenge of finding men.

Later on, it would be the rule that if you were between the ages of 20 and 50, you got to fight in the battle. Up to now, that's not the rule.

Or the 20s and 50-year-olds, they all come together. He has to go and find men. He's not only told to fight in the battle, but go and find some men who will actually go and fight in the battle with you. He has to think it through. He has to apply. Who will he pick? How many will he pick? And that is the principle. The principle here is, in gospel ministry or any work in the church, although we need to pray, we need to do more than pray.

[22:27] We need to think things through, plan things through. And it's such an important thing. One of the series I really enjoyed preaching in one of the other churches was the Book of Acts.

I was starting in John with you. After I preached John in a church, I says, well, if you were reading it as a novel, you'd think, what happened to these folk after Jesus rose and said, go into all the world? How did they go on? The Book of Acts tells you how they got on. And if you know anything of the Book of Acts, they had to make many decisions. They had to think things through.

They were counsels. And then when the gospel spreading, you remember from Jerusalem to Samaria to the ends of the earth. Paul, they planned where they're going to go. And you remember how it came to Europe.

Paul wasn't thinking of bringing the gospel to Europe. We'll go up here. No, you can't go there. We'll go down here. No, you can't go there. You go through. And you get some Macedonian call.

[ 23 : 26 ] You remember, he gets this vision of a man from Macedonia. The gospel's about to enter into Europe, eventually to Scotland. And he says, come over and help us.

And then we are told that during that time, that it says in Acts, that we concluded, after we saw the vision, we prepared to go.

And we concluded that the Lord had called us to go there. They had a meeting. They met. They chatted. And they weighed it all up. And they concluded, yep, that's what we're to go.

They didn't just do things, slapdash. They weighed it all around. Jericho, you remember later on when Joshua comes, he has to walk around every day.

And then seven times. If you read that, you think, why does God do it that way? It just seems, could he not just pray? Lord, we're fine. We'll just pray.

[ 24 : 23 ] We'll lift our hands up. And it'll all happen. We need to apply ourselves to that. It is such a big thing. Organization is not wrong. Victory is always in the Lord, seeking the power of God.

But he does it through organization. Here's a quote that I find very true. Christians have a habit of doing the same things in the same way for a long time in the hope that one day it will work.

I'll read that again. Christians have a habit of doing the same things in the same way for a long time in the hope that one day it will work. It's bonkers.

It's just bonkers. I come across churches that are the exact same as they were 40 years ago.

There's no new thinking. There's no new ideas.

It's just, well, we'll just keep doing it. It worked in 1960, and maybe it'll work today. And it's not. We need to plan. We need to plan and to work.

[ 25 : 28 ] And we need to think strategically. That's why at the end of this, it says, verse 13, Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with, what?

Moses, Aaron, and her? No, with the sword. The sword was still needed to fight this battle. I remember at a conference, and which, if you ever get a bunch of FIC folk, conferences are good because they deal with these things a lot.

How can your church do this? Somebody might come up and say, this is what we did. There's, they're great ideas, and it's worth thinking through the principles. But one thing said this, that we need to think about outputs, and not just inputs.

It says, do not just organize around inputs. In other words, doing things. Seek outputs. In other words, consider everything that you do, and ask how effective this is, and be prepared to change.

In other words, don't just say, well, we usually do a holiday Bible club. We usually do this. We usually do that. Let's just keep doing it. It's worth stopping and saying, how effective is this? Is this the best way that we can be doing this?

[ 26 : 39 ] Don't be afraid to make mistakes, to get things wrong. It makes a big difference. If it's not working, stop it, or change it. That's why I gently try to lead you with the risk assessment, where keep it, stop it, introduce something new, or revise it.

My own feeling was with elders, I've looked through this. I know you guys did it, but the elders have looked through this over the past, and it's still a work in progress with elders picking up, we should change that, we need to stop that, we need to introduce that, develop that, and that's very much their thinking.

I know when I went through it, I had a lot of R's, a lot of revise. It would be good to tweak this. The \$64,000 question is this. How flexible are you as a church to change?

Are you open to change, or are you still doing the same thing in the same way for a long time, in the hope that one day it will just work? Or are you prepared to, what is it they used to say to the students in Oak Hill that I used to get in preaching?

Kill your babies, they used to say, in preaching. Be prepared to, it's so precious, I need to mention this thought in the sermon, it's a great thought, and you need to get rid of a lot of stuff.

[ 27 : 51 ] So the way they put it to emphasize how precious it was, you need to kill your babies, maybe there are babies in the church. You think, that'd be so hard, we've done it this way for so long.

Put yourself in other people's shoes when they come in and so forth. What about that? Understand the times and situation. In 1 Chronicles 12, you have a number of men armed for battle.

They're a great bunch of guys. Judah, the men of Judah, carrying shield and spear, 6,800 ready for battle. Simeon, warriors ready for battle, 7,100.

Levi, 4,600. And then you go all the way down, Benjamin, 3,000. Ephraim, brave warriors, famous in their own clans, 20,600.

The half-tribe of Manasseh, 18,000. And then you read verse 32 of 1 Chronicles 12. Men of Issachar, you know who they are, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do.

[ 28 : 55 ] 200. It didn't matter how many troops they had. You need to actually know how you're going to move these troops and use them. Very impressive men, mighty men for battle, about 50,000 of them.

And you've got these 200 guys who actually know what to do. They're worth their weight in gold. They really are. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if your church number is 250 or 300. You need to know how to handle them, how to use them.

And that is what's really needed. It's a massive thing. It is not easy. Believe you me, this is not easy. When I took on my last church, the vacancy committee comprised of four students, I think it was, final year students at Oak Hill.

Boy, see when you get these guys, they've been through Bible college. They're ready to tackle the world. They are as sharp as a tack. They were on the vacancy committee. Instead, they just say, well, John, what do you think you'll do as a pastor?

They gave me Tim Keller's book. It's the size of a phone book. It's massive. Read that and present to us a theological vision because that's what he bangs on about in the book, which is basically, how are you going to grow your church in this community?

[ 30 : 12 ] It has to be applied to the community in which you're going. What is your theological vision for the work? And I had to present this PowerPoint about a whole hour.

This is the principles for doing this. Here was my theological vision. First of all, you look after the troops. The troops are so, so important.

It's easy for a pastor to come and go, I have great ideas. Why don't we have a rolling your egg down the hill, weak, and just wacky things, just bonker ideas that you think, let's just try all these.

And I go back to the output. Why? Why? What's the point? What is the most important? For me, in any church, it is the troops. You guys. If you guys are down or weary or flat or don't know the gospel or not convinced in the gospel, not loving the Lord, the Lord won't add to this church.

You won't have a clue. When it comes to prayer, you'll not be there. So you have to look after the troops. Are they healthy? Are they fit? Are they weary? Are they disillusioned? I don't know how you were.

[ 31 : 21 ] You seemed a bit flat when we came. And for me, one of the greatest compliments, I think somebody was praying, Lord, we thank you for the unity. That's what I, although I think I've said to you, if I wasn't your pastor, I wouldn't have done anything different over these past two years.

The remit I sat myself for the first two years, strengthen what remains. Love the Lord. Love the gospel. Love each other. Where you have that, you will know.

That's a plate you have to keep spinning all the time. Look after the troops. Get them healthy. Get them motivated. Elders, leadership. Get them fired up. Remember the task.

The task is not a club. I've been rebonded with you guys. There was another church we really bonded with. We either gone on holiday with any one of them. They were the nicest, nicest people. But when it came to evangelism, weren't really interested. Their church was a club. It was a great club, but it was a club. And that church is closed. It's the only church I've pastored that the Lord just pulled the candlestick.

[ 32 : 24 ] You don't exist for each other. You exist primarily for the great commission, for the glory of God. And God is most glorified glorified when the gospel is preached in this area.

And we need to beware of that. Once we're having a good time together, and we're all united, and we like socials, it's not really what it's all about. The task is making disciples.

Have confidence in your weapons. Prayer, the word of God, the gospel. Understand your community. Look at the demographics.

What people group are here? What felt needs are there? 400 and, what is it, 75? Is it right about that number that came for the fundie? That is, that blows my switches.

I've never had that before. Never. There are felt needs. These people will come out for a rolling sausage. That's all it takes to rub shoulders with them.

[ 33 : 19 ] It's harder for you to go in. It's not a great strategy to go in and knock on their door and say to them, do you know where you're going when you die when they're watching Coronation Street. It's the last thing in their mind. But we keep doing these things.

Bring them in. Get to know them. Rub shoulders with them. Think these things through. Understand the physical needs, the emotional needs, the mental needs, spiritual needs, apologetics.

Paul reasoned with people in the temple every day. Are you open to change? My experience has always been the first two years building up the people. Year three, you start to introduce change.

Let's start to, now that we're all loving each other, we can maybe say, maybe you should stop that. Maybe you should do this. Now that we're, the troops are ready to go. Introduce change inside and outside the church.

Year five is lasting change. It's beginning to take root. And then year seven is growth. That's just been my experience in the churches where I have been. It is not easy.

[ 34 : 22 ] So what have we said? Pray, plan. Pray, plan for outputs. Plan with wisdom. Understand what you need to do. The battle did not depend just on Moses' prayer.

It depended on Joshua's skill working under the power of God as a swordsman. Lastly, and if this will finish, support. Support. It wasn't just supplication.

It wasn't just down to Moses. And it wasn't just down to Joshua. The victory in this battle depended on the two guys as well, either side. Moses couldn't have done this despite his, the power of God, the staff of God.

God, it just seems a strange thing to do. But here is a principle. It's right through the scriptures that you need the support of each other. Unity is everything.

It is everything in Christian work. Where we fight and squabble and so forth, we will just fall out with each other. We need the help of each other in ministry, encouragement.

[ 35 : 26 ] I know when you guys have encouraged me, and I know when I've thanked the musicians and the techie folk, it means a lot. You go in the strength of that, don't you, for a week. Just encouraging each other, working together, having the same agenda, buying into the battle, buying into what is needed, thinking and planning together.

You come to church meetings. Everything that's decided is decided with a view to the Great Commission. It's not us riding our own hobby horses. Beware of that.

There's nothing worse when we major on minor things in a church. It divides church. Northern Ireland, I couldn't preach in the setting coming because it was such a big topic. Pre-mill, post-mill, A-mill, whatever.

It was creationism as well. Literal seven days or not. These things divide a church. They distract from the Great Commission. Keep the main thing the main thing.

Encourage each other. One thing I've missed and you don't have in this church that I had in other churches is WhatsApp group, a whole group of just church people, church members, friends of the church.

[ 36 : 35 ] I used to, every day, you want to read this article, Bing, Bing, I fired this out and then folk would fire, I read this. Just this encouragement every day showing that we're all thinking and praying for each other on WhatsApp.

It's a great thing. Encourage. The one another verses, that's why we did that. The one another verses. Forgive one another. Just bear with one another.

If we ditch the one another verses, you can forget the first two points. It's just not going to happen.

We really need to love and care for each other. I talked about a text, didn't I, last week, I think it was, Worship the Lord and the Beauty of Holiness or We Preach Christ Crucified.

One of the best verses I've seen for showing what you are as a church, it was Paul's words to the church at Thessalonica in chapter 2, verse 8, 1 Thessalonians, that we loved you so much that we didn't just share the gospel with you but our very lives as well.

That is what it takes. As churches, we think too much of evangelism or church as an activity.

Sunday for 10 o'clock to 12 or 1 o'clock, this is church.

[ 37 : 50 ] If you're super dedicated, you'll be back out at night and you'll be in that shift as well and you might come midweek. It's a, my own personal life, church life and never the two shall meet in that way.

But to become a gospel community is incredibly impressive where this is a major part of your life. You give yourself to this. That's why I personally like a cafe that's run by Christians that you can meet and you can have sausages and burgers or whatever it is.

You just meet any excuse to meet together, socialize together. They really play a big part. It's not, well, I show an interest to you on a Sunday but Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday is for me. Sunday is, I'll give you a wee bit of my time. Church planting work and a lot of revitalization work, they don't have rules and regulations.

They meet in somebody's house. It's very intimate. Home groups are very good. When they're done right, they are very good. Where we share our lives with each other, that is a bigger thing.

[ 38 : 54 ] It has to be intentional. That won't happen by accident. It has to be intentional living. Churches need to, to my mind, need to buy into these three.

Big churches, and this is I'm finished, big churches are good at some. They're usually good at strategy but they're not so good at the first and the last. Their church is too big for meaningful fellowship and support.

They smile at each other and leave. Supplication, we're Premier League. Lord, watch us. They're not so great. Small churches are different. Small churches are usually good at the first one because they know they need the Lord's help.

They might not always be good at support but they're not usually very good at strategy. The plowing the same path in the same ways doesn't cut it. The Lord has given us a brain and to use that and to plan and to organize.

I pray that whoever comes as your pastor that he will lead you and guide you but please, please, please, please, please don't just look to him.

[ 40 : 02 ] Yes, by all means pray, Lord, send us the man of your choosing. He won't walk in water. He'll be like this guy in the middle. You're going to have to support him because he will become weary and the church is led by elders.

I like that. That's Paul and Gerald holding up your new pastor. And then other elders to come to be developed and to work together.

One man is not going to turn your church around. I don't care how gifted he is, he will never do it. If you rely on him, you will become a cropper. You really will. These three things, prayer and the power of God, seek God's face, think, plan, organize, ditch things, bring new things in but support each other, love each other, care for each other as you move forward with the Lord.

Does that make sense? There are only three simple points, but they are big points, very big points. Bolt them onto Acts 2.42. Boom.

Sorted. That's you guys. Sorted as you go forward. Love the Lord. Keep walking with him. Let's close. I will offer up my life in spirit and in truth. I'll be back this evening.

[ 41 : 15 ] I'll be back this evening. Anyway, I'll be preaching this evening, finishing off the wee series I was doing on the invitations of Jesus. Linked to what I've said this morning, it's another invitation which is to do with faith.

Remember, it's Peter in the boat and if that's you, Lord, tell me to come and the Lord says to him, come, and he steps out the boat. It's to do with taking steps of faith.

The Lord would encourage us to do the dangerous thing, the scary thing, the step of big faith. So that's how I'll finish my time with you this evening to encourage you to step out in faith with God. and Kimmy's doing my week and three. You missed a treat with Jessica last week. Wow, that was good fun and she did very well. So it's Kimmy tonight. If you can't make it, please zoom in on YouTube or whatever.

That would be great as well. That means an awful lot. It's encouraging just to know that there are others who can't make it but can zoom in. Let me just close in prayer. Our loving Heavenly Father, we praise and thank you for your grace and your mercy to us.

[ 42 : 15 ] We thank you for saving us, giving us a future and a hope. Lord, forgive us, Lord, if we stand on that rock and just rejoicing that we are saved and do not see the plight of others. So Father, help us to lift up our eyes once again to see the people of Westerhills, members of our family, sheep without a shepherd, sheep ripe, Lord, for salvation.

So Father, we do just pray that as we have considered how you've worked in the past and the principles, Lord, in which you still work today, help us to be people of prayer. Help us to be people who think and who plan and who organize and who weigh things up and who know the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Help us, Father, to be people who love you, who love your Word, who love the Savior, who love the Gospel, and who also love one another. Help us, Father, to support each other as well moving forward.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, folks. And the ■ Thank you.