

Leadership Part 1

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Well, it is really good to be with you and I didn't expect children here. Good to see you, too. And I am going to talk to you right at the beginning so that you just listen and then the rest of it is quite difficult for you, but you can fine listen. But, children, the most important thing for you to do in your life is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. And when you have done that you have to pray that he will use you for his honor and glory, that he will use you to spread his kingdom. And who knows that you coming here this morning might be the beginning of your trusting Christ and the idea that you are going to live for Christ and serve him and transform your community. In other words, you might grow up to be church leaders. And so I am really pleased that you are here and I am sorry that my material wasn't in any way directed at you. And therefore I thought that I would acknowledge your presence before we started.

And if you are not a Christian here this morning, then don't think of leadership. Think of knowing Christ, because that is the absolute prerequisite for any Christian service. Otherwise it is futile.

But leadership is our topic and we are going to start that now under what comes to mind as you start to think about leadership. You think about the qualities needed, the responsibilities, the actions required, the great sense of purpose and glory in serving Christ. I hope you think of something like that, too.

Can you train leaders or do you just recognize one when you see them? Well, my time today is meant to be a means of an introduction to the idea of leadership, a biblical theology, perhaps, of leadership and how you do it rather than a motivation to it. You obviously are motivated because you are here. So I want to sort of do a biblical theology.

I have produced a handout which has all the details there. I am skipping over, skimming the Bible text and it is not a good thing to skim over, but in two sessions that is all you can do. But there is lots and lots of material here. And the way to work through this document is to look up every biblical text in its context and think about it. That is the only way to learn and not just to read it and absorb it and agree with me, but to look it up and to ponder it and to see how it applies to you. So there is lot's of biblical texts and you can have fun drawing diagrams and so on. So I have produced a handout as a worksheet. And if any of you would like interaction, you want feedback, you want me to

mark it, you know, it is a project, then my email is included. And as long as you put leadership on so I open it—I don't usually open emails from people I don't know—then I will interact with you. So there you are. So you have a motivation to think about the document and to read it.

Well, in some ways I am a bit like King Saul. I have never been at the work for 40 years. In these 40 years he died. But when he was chosen as king, if you remember, in 1 Samuel 9:22 they look for him, but he wasn't to be found, was he? He was a young chap. So they inquired further of the Lord, has the balm come here yet? And the Lord said yes, he has hidden himself amongst the baggage.

Now in 1973 I hid myself in a church planting situation amongst the baggage and my church members at the beginning of that local congregation I was dragged out and appointed as an elder. I wasn't particularly keen on it. I didn't have any desire for it. I had a desire to serve the Lord and to see his glory manifested in the planting of local churches. So I was passionate about that, but I had no desire for the responsibility or the weight of it. And so I was found among the baggage and I have been at it ever since, nearly 40 years.

I lacked confidence when I started, like Saul. But over the years I have displayed some good qualities in leadership. I was created constantly thinking of new things and new ways of doing things in a biblical sense, never outside the biblical parameters, hopefully. Sometimes I was, but then the church corrected me. But the aim was to apply the Bible in a modern day setting with vigor and vision and courage. And sometimes I was like that and sometimes I motivated other people to be like that. But sadly also there were other times when I fumbled, when I was pragmatic and didn't act on principle and I lacked courage, when I lacked vision, when I lacked faith and decisiveness and so on. Leaders are like that, aren't they? You have things that you are good at and things that you have not been good at. And as you look at, it depends on what mood you are in what you see of leadership.

And leadership comes in many shapes and sizes, from kings to fathers, from managing directors to managers of small groups of people. And leadership in the Christian... from the Christian point of view is never arbitrary or absolute. For instance, if you are the managing director or the boss of a firm, in a sense you may feel that you are free to do as you please even to go as far as adjust the libel rates or whatever illegally because there is nobody watching you. But that is never true, is it, for the Christian, because whatever the Christian does in whatever situation, as Paul says, we are accountable to God. He says this in Colossians chapter four and verse one.

“Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”¹

Now if you wanted arbitrary power in the Roman world, then to own a slave might be to have it. But you didn't have it, because you were accountable to God for the way that you

¹ Colossians 4:1.

dealt with that person. And that is true for every human being, but particularly true towards Christians, because we recognize it.

So I want to look at models of leadership found in the Bible, first of all. And it is useful when you think about them to draw a diagram—as I have drawn something like this in the front of your book—and to see how it works out. And I went through the patterns of leadership in the Bible and drew all sorts of diagrams. And I decided I might do a PowerPoint array, but then I decided I would just stick to three models to give you three examples and you could develop the rest yourself if you are into that creativity of drawing diagrams and models of how things work.

Well, the commonest model of leadership built in the Old Testament and society as a whole is what are the mediated model, that you have a boss and then you have somebody underneath them and then somebody else and somebody else and the chain is as long as you like depending on the size of the organization. And you have authority coming down the train and accountability always a sense up the chain. A hierarchical system you might call it. I call it a mediated model, because people stand in between God and the people below them in the system, a system of persons or things arranged in a graded order, a body of persons in holy orders organized into graded ranks. That is the dictionary definition and that is that is what the church has done. I mean, the fact that the dictionary has defined it is, perhaps, a scandal for us New Testament Christians and I hope you will see what a scandal it is to have it defined like that, organized into graded ranks.

Well, we are going to look at the biblical model and we start with Adam in your sheet there. I am going to just look at few things to illustrate. Adam was a leader over creation that God put him there. God took the man and he put him in the garden to care for it in Genesis two and that reflects what he had already said to the man, “Be fruitful, increase in numbers, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over it.” In other words, Adam was appointed by God with authority—he is still accountable to God—to rule over the world in which he lived.

In relation to people we see this mediated model in Moses as a relationship with God and with Israel. You think of Moses. He was sent by God to lead his people out of Egypt. Moses was initially reluctant, so reluctant that he encouraging says, “Lord, send someone else.” And God sent him anyway.

Again, God is never at a loss to make you do what he wants you to do. And so Moses went, but he did take account of Moses’ reluctance, didn’t he? And he sent him along with Aaron and he said, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh. Your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh,” Exodus seven. In other words, Moses was acting under God’s authority to speak God’s Word to Pharaoh. And because he was nervous, Aaron was doing the job for Moses. So you have that graded rank there.

Moses, too, was appointed by the people as a mediator. God used Moses to speak to his people, but the people used Moses to speak to God. They were dead scared of God. You

remember in Exodus 20 they said this. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen, but do not have God speak to us or we will die."

And so that mediated relationship of God, someone else and the people existed in every sphere throughout the Old Testament. In the religious sphere there was a highly complex system of high priests, priests, Levites, all the specific duties of the Levites within the temple. It was a highly organized structure of leadership and also on top of that in the religious sphere you have the prophets who were inspired of God and spoke God's Word to the people and interpreted God's Word to the people. And then in the social and national sphere God's people had a mediated system, judges, then kings, nobles and all the accoutrements of the state with all its expense, just as God warned and just as Samuel warned.

So that is the first model you see in the Bible. The second model I want to look at in leadership and the most encouraging model, the most inspiring model is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this model is immensely rich and I am only going to deal with three aspects of Christ's leadership that we can mimic, but there are many others, too, that you can ponder, some just ponder in worship because you are never going to be a king with every knee bows to, but you can bow to Christ and worship him and that will strengthen your own leadership.

But think of him as a King of glory, of {?} into space who rules untrammelled now and yet died on a cross. That has a lot to teach you about leadership and power. We very rarely learn it.

He is immensely rich. Though he was and is God, he was willing in his role as the redeemer of his people to humble himself, to pour himself into the role of a man, a servant, a servant who served his people in a most spectacular fashion. You remember Philippians two: who being in very nature God, made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. And then he goes on. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Have you ever experienced riches? Well, you have, because you are English and you live in a posh place of London. You are immensely wealthy. And then have you ever experienced poverty? You probably haven't. The nearest sometimes we get to experiencing poverty is when we go on holiday. I remember being on holiday in Switzerland, living in a sort of a one room and having to walk to the supermarket. Well, I bought as I normally buy in supermarkets. You know, you put it all in the trolley and you pile it up and you wheel it out to the car. I had forgotten I didn't have a car. And so there I was with these bags staggering back and I thought this is poverty. This is what most people in the world do. It is hard work and so on. I mean, it isn't poverty, is it? What was wrong with that? Because most people in the world wouldn't have been able to afford what I got in my bags. But they might have been carrying water, because they need that to live and it would have been just hard work.

And so you realize if you experience... or the poverty you might experience an element of third world poverty when you go camping and it rains. And there is mud everywhere and you are cold, but you can always escape. But others are trapped in that, certain in Sri Lanka are trapped amongst the mud and the rain because it rains a lot where {?} comes from.

And so if you have experienced power and glory and magnificence beyond thinking about and then suddenly you come into this world and there is nothing to wash in and everybody is against you and eventually you end up on a cross, it is almost incredible to think that that is happening and you are wanting it to happen because you love somebody so much that you are willing to do it. That is what leadership is about, giving up your rights in order to make sure other people have them.

In this role as a Redeemer he learned what it takes to be submissive to a leader. And for anyone to lead, you need to experience the experience of being led as you realize how painful it is, particularly when you don't agree with the people that are leading you or you would have done it differently. And he was self aware about this submission to his Father.

It says in Hebrews:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.²

But I want you to turn to this. Jesus was self aware about his submission to his Father. And I want you to turn now to John. Most of the texts I am just alluding to and I am sorry. You will just have to go home and read them or you will already know some of them. But some in John have had a profound effect on my leadership and my preaching and here are some of them, because here is Jesus as a model. John eight and verse 28.

“So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.’”³

Notice that. Speak just what the Father has taught me. Think of the submission there.

Those of you that are sons with fathers can you imagine that sort of submission to your dad? Because if you are a son and you have power and you are growing and you want to have your own opinions, don't you? Do it your own way. You don't want to be stuck in the mud like your dad is. But, you see, there is none of that dynamic here, the humble submission. I know father and son isn't quite the same thing, but he is in a role of doing the work his father wanted him to do and he is cautious about doing it. He is only speaking what the Father has taught him. And often leaders in God's churches to have

² Hebrews 5:8-9.

³ John 8:28.

that dependence and submission to the will of God, that is so rare to be submissive to the Word of God, so rare.

We moderns, you see, think we can improve on God's methods and structures. They are old fashioned, after all. Little churches scattered here and there when we are in this mega world.

{?} is old fashioned, isn't it? So old fashioned he is eternal and changeless. It is incredible he could be so old fashioned, isn't it? But, you know, why isn't he modern? Why isn't he with it? Why isn't he changing? We know better than God in the moral sphere. Churches in Britain have certainly done better than that. We have known much, much better than God for nearly 2000 years in church structures here and worship we are constantly developing new ideas which are quite outside the book. And when it comes to evangelistic methods how could he be so boring? He just had a word, just a word, just a spoken word. There were no dancing girls. There was nothing to attract you to the Greek temple, no scantily clad women at the front gyrating about, no smells and bells and mysticism and the whole offerings. Just a word, just a man speaking. Well, you can't expect people to listen to a man speaking. But why did God do it? Well, he did. That is his method whether we like it or not.

I don't say this. I don't think a word is boring and I don't think we should be boring. I think it is entertaining to listen to people talk. We enjoy talking, don't we? And so there is nothing wrong with it, but God selected that method. He could have selected the DVD, the television or any other of the ... but he actually selected this method of passing it on through preaching, through heralding his message. And I think, perhaps, one way you could see him doing that ... why he did that is that it is suitable whether you have that technology or you don't. It is suitable for any people anywhere, under a tree in Africa, in an igloo in Canada, here on the streets of London. You don't need anything other than the Word, the Spirit and the message and you are off. And you can change the world. Maybe God was wise after all.

So let's go on with this. That is a challenge. If you are going to lead, don't lead unless you are willing to speak just what God has said, nothing more, nothing less. And then he says:

"The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."⁴

That is another mark of leadership. It is to please the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was to please his Father in this sense.

This self awareness of his submission to the Father is found also if you turn over to 12 and 49, 50.

⁴ John 8:29.

“For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.”⁵

And he was willing to be submissive to that. If you are going to be a church leader and you are willing to be submissive as to what you say and how you say it from the Scriptures, if you are not, don’t bother. You just hinder the Church.

“I know that his command leads to eternal life.”⁶

For, you see, if you say what he wants you to say and you say it how he wants you to say it, it is so powerful that the people who listen to you find eternal life. You have done them the most good anybody ever could do them. Doctors can keep you going until you ... something falls off or stops, but not forever. But the preacher who preaches the Word of God and leads people to understand the Word of God and trust the Lord Jesus Christ gives something to that human being that nothing is going to take away and they will in glory revel in it forever and forever, eternal life. It is a magnificent message. Jesus knew that.

And in his prayer in John 17 he says:

“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”⁷

He knew he was submissive to his Father. He knew he was going to do his Father’s work and he was going to say his Father’s words and he was going to do it in his Father’s way and he was bringing glory through that submission. He was submissive to his Father’s words and will in his life. Christ like leadership has to think like that. It is the chief mark of leadership.

If you are looking for a leader ask that.

Now any Christian leader unwilling to submit to Scripture—here is something for women here and for the children and for everybody else who is never going to be a leader. And you need to be like this and be bold. Any Christian leader unwilling to submit to Scripture should not be followed, never. Do not give them your support, however gracious, however attractive, however good looking, however successful, however they stir you up. Don’t follow them.

I like a good preacher and I am not always very discerning. And if they are really sophisticated and smooth and intellectual they can carry me away. And I once went to hear a rather unorthodox preacher, a Methodist, and I really liked him. I said, “Oh, wasn’t he good?” My wife went with me. She said, “Oh, I am surprised at you. Didn’t you pick up this and that and that? It is unbiblical.”

⁵ John 12:49.

⁶ John 12:50.

⁷ John 17:4.

She listened to every word. I just was taken with the gloss and the polish and the finish and the intellectual stimulation. She said, “It didn’t fit the Bible. I am surprised at you, John.”

I said, “Very good.” She did a good job there. You women can do that. You know, if your husbands get out of hand you can say, “Well, look. Where is it in the Scriptures?”

Secondly in his model for leadership which he taught to his disciples it was so radically different than the world’s model that they couldn’t cope with it. They were expecting power and glory, horses and chariots and thrones and a kick of the finger and the falling on the face. Men love that, don’t they? That is the sort of thing we think about in leadership. I don’t know whether you do, but you do, don’t you? And you remember that episode in Matthew 20. You can turn with me. You will remember it.

Jesus had predicted his death and they understood it. And James and John are concerned to get the top spots in the coming kingdom and they use their mother to apply pressure on Jesus. She is a relative, you see. They were networking and lobbying and you ladies are good at that, aren’t you, networking and lobbying? And so you push forward. And they were pushed forward to push their mother forward to get the best deal. And, of course, the rest of the disciples who also wanted the best deal were indignant. And Jesus deals with them.

You see, men love power. Wherever you put them, they are constantly scheming to get it. And these men are next to the Lord and they are scheming in the Lord’s presence to get the power. So, I mean, that shows just how wedded we are as men to power. Why the politicians do the work? Why are people ambitious? We love power. We have a lust for it. I wonder if you have ever understood your own lust for power?

I used to think I didn’t have it and, again, my wife has been very good to me. She says, “Oh, the reason you don’t have any insight is that you are so rarely crossed.” And that is a very significant thing. You don’t realize your lust for power until somebody stands on you and you are crossed and you begin to scheme to get it back or to keep it and then you realize that it is there in your heart even though you thought it never was. And so these men are there in front of the Lord scheming to be on the right and the left. And you remember how the Lord goes on. And how little churches and people haven’t noticed what he said or taken any account of it over the millennia since then. We have bishops’ palaces and elaborate crowns of gold and men’s wealth and display of it, don’t we, over the millennia?

Jesus called them together and said, verse 25:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them.”⁸

⁸ Matthew 20:25.

They do, don't they? That is how society works, the titles, the display of power and of might and wealth. Why else could people buy huge black cars that are shiny that you can't park anywhere in London, but it is a good display of wealth as you wish past everybody, isn't it? That is it, you see. We love that sort of things. And when you can't and when you have really got power and wealth, then you have to use terror or suppression to keep hold of it. You exploit people to get above them. And that is what has gone on. And then you have many layers below you of servants to make you feel good.

Societies and, sadly, churches, even independent Baptist churches have displayed over the centuries such leadership. What is wrong with it? Somebody will say, "Well, you know, some people are born to hold this. Some people are born to lead and other people are born to follow. And I am the one that is born to lead and so people must follow me. And in any case God has called me and I have got God's Holy Spirit and spiritual people will recognize it. And so I am going to be the leader."

Well, I have heard that reasoning. I wonder if you have used it. But look at the radical words Jesus speaks. If you are going to be a leader like that, fair enough, but look at what you should do.

"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."⁹

Well, that is bad enough. Being a servant is hard work. But he goes on.

"...and whoever wants to be first must be your slave."¹⁰

That just cuts your legs off. Well, we don't understand it, because we haven't slaves, but we understand enough to know what a slave is.

"... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."¹¹

A slave had no rights. He was to be committed to exactly fulfilling his master's commands, wasn't he, under punishment of death, perhaps. Do you really want to be a leader and to be a slave?

Now it is interesting, isn't it? Have you ever thought about that the price for leadership in a local Baptist church in what way is an elder a servant or a slave to his fellow Christians? Now those of you that aren't leaders might be beginning to think really interesting thoughts. But it is worth thinking about, isn't it? Because you think if it is ok to be a servant or a slave to God. But to be a servant or slave to those that you serve within the local congregation, well, men, it is rare for us men. You ladies will understand

⁹ Matthew 20:26.

¹⁰ Matthew 20:27.

¹¹ Matthew 20:28.

more about it, because you often do display that sort of servant leadership in the way you care for others in churches, certainly women in our churches display this {?} over the decades that I have been there in a really, really commendable way.

So here is this model of leadership. It is one where the Lord Jesus displayed what it was like. He served his people by dying for them. That is it. Jesus did this consciously, too, of his immense glory. Sometimes you can feel you are a servant because you are a servant. You know, it is, I mean, you haven't got any glory. You are just an ordinary guy or an ordinary person. But Jesus was conscious of his power and yet did this. Now it is the significant thing.

You remember in John 13 he says Jesus knew that his Father put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. Now if you thought that God had put everything under your power and that you were come from God and you were returning to God, what would you have done next? Most of us would have said, "Wow," wouldn't we? You know, don't you recognize me as a leader that has been sent? But what did Jesus do? Just fluff his coat, wrapped a towel around him and did the job that none of them were willing to do, he washed their feet. Incredible. And that is another brilliant example of leadership. He wasn't a wimp. He knew what he was. And yet he knew what his people needed and did it for them. Maybe that is where we—teasing out this idea of what slave and servant means.

He saw himself as the good shepherd. That is another thing of leadership, isn't it? There is authority that the shepherd has. But there is also care and protection, that he was willing to lay down his life for the sheep.

"Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."¹²

Now these things are very, very familiar. We talk about them, the excitors. But do they change the way we view and exercise leadership within our local congregations? Now how can you men test yourselves? Are you a leader in the making? How are you as a leader?

Well, most of us that are married can test our theories and practice of leadership in the way that Paul says in Ephesians five, if you just turn to that. We shall come back to this in a minute and very practical application next talk to Ephesians and chapter five. You know what I am talking about, don't you, men?

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."¹³

Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her in the same way husbands. How are you doing?

¹² John 15:13.

¹³ Ephesians 5:25.

We will come back to that. Also as we have seen, amongst the fractious Philippians. This refers to everybody, but also to leaders. He says it to all of the people in the church at Philippi, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” So if you are going to be a leader, you should be like Christ.

So I wonder how you would draw diagrammatically this insight into self giving, self effacing servant leadership. You see, Jesus wasn’t a doormat. He had a real authority. He called Herod that fox. He cleansed the temple and was angry with the corruption and particularly in Matthew 23, for turn with that in those woe sermons. He dealt with false religion in a most brave and straightforward fashion and said things that we have neglected. Matthew 23 and verse eight.

“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi.’”¹⁴

Now that is a relief, isn’t it? I love practical application like that. And most of us do get gratification like that. When did you last ... when were you last tempted to be called rabbi? Never. You never were you? So that sort of application can make you feel very smug and self confident. Well, that is true. I am never going to be called rabbi. Then he goes on

...for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father’, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called ‘teacher’, for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.¹⁵

These are {?} then of Christ like leadership, a consciousness of dependence on his Father, a consciousness of his authority and power, a willingness to serve and take the lowest place and an absence of all worldly accoutrements that power, wealth, force, titles and privilege. That is a really good way to start thinking about leadership.

And then there is all these other things that are on your list about leadership that I am not going into, but that are models there. He is a king that every knee bows. He has great and overwhelming glory. He is our mediator, our advocate, our high priest, our representative, our Savior and worthy of all our worship and praise.

The final model is a new covenant model. You have a meditative model. You have had Christ like service. He is humble. He served. He was obedient. He was conscious of his glory and we are going to look at church now just briefly. Church is used three ways in the Bible, the word church. It is used in a non technical way and it is a gathering of people in Acts 19 when they were rioting at Ephesus. It is used in the church gathered in heaven, the church universal in Ephesus one and it is used of local churches, plural, as

¹⁴ Matthew 23:8.

¹⁵ Matthew 23:8-12.

outposts of the heavenly universal church, the gathered church in Christ in heaven and we are just local outposts, colonies of it waiting to go there.

There are no national churches. There are no denominations. There is no international church. And that is disappointing for power hungry men, but it has sadly not stopped power hungry men developing them since the first century from Ignatius onwards.

After all, you see, power and glory in this world, clout in this world comes from numbers and money and the projection of those things on the world stage. Think of how much USA politicians pay to bribe their electors or their advertising authorities to get themselves elected, millions and millions and millions of pounds. The person with the most money usually wins, terrible. But that is how that society works, which is, of course, why the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem with 100,000 tanks and two million men to conquer the world. Wait a minute. What do I see next? There wasn't any tanks and there weren't any men. There was a donkey and then there was a bit of wood. And there were some nails and there was a body that is hideous and bleeding and dying and dying. And yet in such weakness and feebleness he did more good than any other man has ever done, because it says in Scripture:

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”¹⁶

In doing his Father's will and coming with his Father's word, in fulfilling his Father's destiny, he changed the destiny of billions of people for good. Well, you see, that is where the servant leadership can still do the same. It is leadership here in the local church which is our theme and in the Bible there are two officers. There are elders, pastors and overseers, all one group of one men. The name is used. They are interchangeable. And there are deacons. And there are other references to leaders or who act as rulers and all the texts are down there.

Now is this model... how is this model? How would you draw this model? Would you draw it as a mediated model? Christ, elder one, elder two, elder three, deacon one, deacon two, deacon three, church members, men, women, maybe children. Is that it? No. That is how it is in most Baptist churches, because we have developed some of these senior pastor, assistant, trainee. We haven't gone so far as having an archbishop and bishops and so on, but we have done the same thing. We have developed hierarchy because that is what men do. The model is like this. You have got Christ there right in the top. And underneath him you have all Christ's people, men, women and children, all that believe in him with direct access to him, knowing him as their head, filled with his Spirit. And underneath these people you have people in this local congregation with gifts who are serving the congregation, enabling them to develop their full potential as human beings whom Christ has saved as men and women. You see, you women can be ... you don't need to be a man to be a fulfilled woman. You know that, you women. You don't need to have a man's role. God has made you as a woman and you need to flower as a woman in God's Church and use all the gifts that God has given you in God's Church.

¹⁶ Colossians 2:15.

And the elder's job is to encourage you to do that. The leader's job, the deacon's job is to encourage you to be able to do that without worrying on whether the rent is going through the roof and so on.

So it isn't a mediated model. There is one mediator in that sense and that is Christ. And all Christians in a relationship to him. This idea that you can, you know, the Church, you know, the modern church hasn't got out of the Old Testament. It is incredible, isn't it, that 2000 years after the event of the new covenant, they are still in the old covenant in Church structures. The new covenant is that now we are all a chosen people, kings and priests to our God. That is what it says in Peter. And in Ephesians it says:

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”¹⁷

There is no one in between, no priest, no popes, no leaders, no elders. You are there. You have got Christ. He is yours. Enjoy him. There is no need or justification in local churches for priests, archbishops and the like. The unique thing about you as a Christian, the exciting thing about you as a Christian is you are united to Christ. And in Christ you have every spiritual blessing. You are not like him. And that the way that those spiritual blessings come to you are through elders serving you by preaching the Word, displaying Christ so that you are drawn to him and say, “Wow, he is mine.”

Have you ever had that experience? When a Sunday is a good Sunday that is what you have in the pew. Sometimes a good Sunday convicts you of sin, too, but, you know, when the recall good Sunday you see Christ and something of his glory.

Well, there is an equality now. You are all brothers. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave, free, male or female. You are all one in Christ Jesus. So why have you got the need for leaders, elders and deacons? Well, the structure is like this: Christ, the members, then those with the gifts to enable the members to function as God's people and God has given true leaders to his people to enable them to function together as a unit, as a dynamic spirit filled body of people who are serving Christ. That is what the leader's job is who teach, who rule, who pastor, who watch over your souls. And they are appointed within the local church by the local church, accountable to the local church and accountable to God in the way that they exercise their authority. And you have got all the texts there.

Now the role of serving in the local church by the use of God's gifts does mean that there is real authority. It isn't that they... just as Christ had authority so your elders have authority. But like all gifts, that authority is to be used for the good of the whole community, not to create and protect the position of the person doing the job which is often what is done. The pastor's job there is to rule the congregation that promotes harmony, Christ likeness, a vision for the glory of Christ, a vision for church planting, a vision for mission. That is his job. It is an immense job to motivate you, to encourage you, to see the Spirit fill you and to drive you on to greater glory. That is his job.

¹⁷ Ephesians 2:18.

And the people's responsibility is to respect and obey our leaders. That is important there. that is why it is multiple.

Why does the Church have multiple leadership, elders, elders, pastors, always plural? Because, you know, you don't realize how tough it is to follow somebody until you have to submit. Because if you are the one man band and you never have to do anything other than what you say for 40 years then you don't realize how difficult it is for other people having to do what you say. But if you are in a group, you are constantly to be submissive to your fellow elders. This is the very model of Christ like servant leadership. We use the same tools as elders. We are to be filled with the Spirit to have a knowledge of God's will from his Word. We have got to have an obedience and submission to it. We have got to teach only that Word. We have got to love the people we serve and, more radically, we have got to be willing to die for them. I wonder if we would be.

And the authority isn't in the office, but it is in the Word. That is the most important thing. You mustn't say that you are the Lord's anointed and people must obey you. You must display in Scripture what the Word says and how people should put that into practice in their lives. So the model for New Testament leadership in the local church is serving one another and helping each other reach their full potential in their body, in the body, unfettered and uncluttered in their relationship with Christ. You don't get in the way. You point them there and they see him and they are motivated by the Holy Spirit that has united them to Christ to go on and serve Christ.

I want to end by reading Ephesians four which demonstrates that. You probably looked at that when you looked at what the church community was. So important that you are a member of a local church, because when he applies, in Ephesians there is the doctrinal section and then he is... the next section, four onwards, he is applying the Christian life. And the way he applies the Christian life is now you are a Christian, live a life worthy of the Lord? What do you do? The first thing as a Christian, you get baptized and join a local congregation and serve there. That is what he is saying. And then he is all into practicing the rest of your life in society. But he says here—and I am finishing with this:

He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.¹⁸

That is the aim of leadership, Christ likeness in everybody.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:10-13.

in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.¹⁹

You, as I say when I am teaching on this, you may only be a bit of gristle in a Ruly's knee, but unless you are working Ruly will never kick the ball again. If he had got a torn cruciate ligament at the back of his knee he is done for as a footballer. And so you might be just that bit of gristle in this congregation and unless you are doing your work, the church will be legless. Think of that.

Thank you.

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:14-16.