

Ephesians 4:4-16

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[0:00] This morning we have before us the great occasion to install Clayton Elder to serve as an elder for our church. I'll do my very best this morning to answer each of these questions with a summary statement, followed by some form of explanation, however brief, for the sake of our time together.

However, before we dive into these questions, I want to help each of you recognize that a study of the office of elder, an office that God has given to the church, should not be a boring academic pursuit. This should not be a study reserved for those who may someday go into vocational ministry. You see, Christ Jesus is the builder and sustainer of the church.

So it matters that we understand how it is that He does this. If we love Christ, we will love His church.

And we will be concerned about how He has ordered the church to function. We should appreciate the way that He is building us together into a body for the praise of His name.

[1:38] And the appointing of elders is a part of that process. So in order to do so, we're going to need to look at a number of texts this morning. But I'd like to begin with Ephesians chapter 4, verses 4 through 16.

Before I read this, I remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and our good. And as such, we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands.

Beginning in verse 4 of Ephesians chapter 4. There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, it says, when He ascended on high, He led a host of captives and He gave gifts to men. In saying He ascended, what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?

[2:50] He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things. And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This is a very classic ecclesiological text. That we have this Christ, right, who came and dwelt amongst us, who has now ascended, and in His ascension, He has gifted people in the church. That the church might minister to itself, to one another. That we might not be immature, but rather mature. And it's a beautiful text to this end.

[4:23] That we not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. That we not be deceived by those who will work to deceive the church.

But that we would speak the truth to one another in love. That we would properly exemplify Christ in the places which we live because we're doing this work of ministry together.

And Paul says he gives gifts to this end. Draw your attention back to verse 11. Paul says that Jesus gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers.

And why did He give them? To equip the saints for the work of ministry. For the building up of the body of Christ. That these gifted people would be passing along equipping that we would be built up in this way.

There is a lot of understandings about what is meant by apostles and prophets of angels. I don't want to get into any of that. But I just want to draw your attention simply to this idea of shepherds and teachers.

[5:36] And in the Greek, the and is not there. And so I think more properly it should be understood as pastor-teachers. Both the title and the description of what it is that this particular gifting does.

Jesus has given to the church pastor-teachers to do this work of equipping so that the church can build itself up in love. That we would be more like Christ.

That's why it matters that we consider this topic. Why do we care? Because we want to look like Christ. Because we want Christ to be honored.

We want Christ to be glorified in this place. So we need to care about the questions I have posed to you this morning. And we most certainly need to care about the answers.

So let's look at them, I hope, in brief. We'll see. Number one. I'm going to move pretty quick this morning. Number one. Who are elders?

[6:42] Who are elders? Very short summary statement. Elders are men qualified and appointed. Elders are men qualified and appointed.

Come with me, Will, if you will, please, to 1 Timothy chapter 3. 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Here Paul writes to Timothy, who's in Ephesus. The saying is trustworthy.

If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive. For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

[7:53] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

So, you'll find, if you're being astute in this text, that we don't see the word elder anywhere in it, but we see rather the office of overseer.

And without belaboring the point this morning, put forth to you that these terms are interchangeable. The idea of overseer, elder, pastor, bishop.

All of these are words used to describe the very same office. So, we note in this text, first off, that these overseers or elders, which is speaking to a spiritual maturity, are men.

Note in almost every verse, the male pronouns. I think it's in all of them except verse 3, if I'm not mistaken. Verse 1, he desires a noble task.

[9:07] Verse 2, he's the husband of one wife. Verse 4, he must manage keeping his children. Verse 5, how will he care for God's church?

Verse 6, he must not be a recent convert, or he may become. Verse 7, he must be so that he.

Beloved, this text is only seven verses, and yet it contains eight pronouns, plus the title of husband. Should we have any doubt that Paul meant for elders to be men?

Many do. So, let's make the point just a bit further. In the same letter, 1 Timothy 2, verse 8-13, Paul writes to Timothy, Let a woman work quietly with all submissiveness.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. Rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was born first, then Eve.

[10:35] We will not unpack all that this text means this morning. I want to draw us specifically to, though, the authority that Paul mentions.

He says that he does not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man. We understand this to be spiritual authority.

He's talking in the context of the church. And I will admit that there is some, maybe much, ambiguity here. This is a bit of a gray area.

What exactly is spiritual authority? For example, can I read a book authored by a woman? Many conferences will have women come and speak at them.

Passion, for example, each year typically has Beth Moore, who really faithfully teaches the Bible. Is it okay for us to go to such a thing? I'm not going to answer those questions for you this morning.

[11:41] I have answers for them. You're welcome to come ask me later. But we can be sure that in the case of elders, there is no ambiguity.

That in the context of the local church, that it would be considered authority for a woman to be in such a position. Our text uses this word overseer, episkopon.

Episkopon, right? Where do we get the title from elder from? In the parallel text in Titus chapter 1. Presbyteros, to oversee or to protect or to guard.

Right? This is a spiritual authority given to this office. And ladies, I will let you know that I do not stand before you with any pride about that at all.

I stand before you with trembling. In God's good order, he has determined that men would serve as elders. And men who serve well in that position do so with a great deal of humility.

[12:46] Why me? Why, oh, me? These are men. These are men who are also qualified.

Not just any man, but a qualified man. And we have in this text, in 1 Timothy, a list of qualifications. We also can see a very similar list in Titus chapter 1, verse 5 through 9.

A parallel text. But are these the only qualifications? Certainly we want men giving leadership to read their Bibles and pray.

We want these men to be characterized by a personal holiness that we can observe in this way. So what I think that Paul is doing here is he's speaking specifically to these qualifications that are, in fact, observable.

The recognized quality of this man. How is it then, right, that we as a church are meant to look and see if a man is qualified?

[13:55] By these observable qualities. These things that are coming out of who he is. That express his very character. And there's a concern, not just about the church's observation, but how it is that this qualified man interacts with those outside of the church as well.

Beginning of verse 7. Paul says, moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders. So when the lost world looks at the church and see who gives leadership to that church, they respect these people.

These are good qualities, right? This is a man worth respecting. And Paul gives us both some positive and some negative.

So he states things in the pot of must be this, should be this, and some things that he should not be. So notice verse 2. These are all positive.

Above reproach. The husband of one wife, so he's not a womanizer. Sober-minded, controlled in his thinking. Self-controlled, controlled in his actions.

[15:08] Respectable, hospitable, welcoming to people, and able to teach. Verse 3, we see some in the negative. Positive, not a drunkard.

Not violent, but then the positive, gentle. Not quarrelsome, always stirring up controversy. Not a lover of money.

And then back to verse 4. In the positive again, he must manage his household well. As an example for how he would manage a greater house. A house of faith. He must keep his children, if he has children, submissive.

And then back to the negative again in verse 6. He must not be a recent convert. He could become puffed up if he's a recent convert. He must have learned the lesson of humility.

And these are, of course, qualities that we would want to be true of any Christian person, with one possible exception, the being a husband. And an elder must be a model of holiness.

[16:16] We don't say, this is for an elder. An elder should be qualified in this way, but other people don't need to obtain to these qualities.

Well, of course we want all Christians everywhere to be above reproach. To be sober-minded. To be self-controlled. To be respectable. To be hospitable. We want these things to be true of all Christian people. And I believe what he's trying to communicate here, Paul, is that these men are supposed to lead in this.

Elders are supposed to be models of holiness. Not perfect, but excelling in that pursuit of perfection. Getting out ahead of others in this pursuit of growing up into Christ's likeness.

This means, for Clay, that he has to press in. And when others wonder what it looks like to follow Jesus, they must find an example in him.

In the way that he picks himself back up when he does sin, repents, and follows once again Christ. That he's out ahead. That he's pressing on in holiness and helping us do the very same.

[17:32] There's an additional exception in our 1 Timothy 3 text. And that is this idea of being able to teach. Paul expounds upon this in Titus 1 and verse 9 where he writes, He, this elder, must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.

So that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. An elder is to know the word of God and be able to communicate in the affirmative and in the negative.

They must be able to say, yes, this, as well as have the boldness to say, no, not that. We want all people to be growing up in this type of maturity.

Elders particularly must lead in this way. Knowing the word of God and being able to communicate it. This means for Clay. That he needs to continue to be a faithful student of the Bible.

We need to give him space and time to be able to do such a thing. That he would be ready in season and out of season to instruct us in the truth as he's done well in the past.

[18:50] So these are men qualified and appointed. There are two instances of elders being appointed in the Bible.

We see this in Titus 1, verse 5. Paul writes to Titus, This is why I left you in Crete that you might put what remained into order. The things that had yet to be finished in establishing these churches.

We see it also in Acts chapter 14, verse 23. It says, Now, some will argue from these two texts that only apostles could appoint elders.

And therefore, elders should no longer be appointed in the church. This case is made fairly broadly. However, we don't believe that Titus or Barnabas were apostles.

Barnabas is called an apostle in Acts 14, verse 14. But this is likely the more general use of the term which means messenger. One who is sent with a message. Further, Paul does not command Timothy to appoint elders.

[20:11] But simply instructs him how to recognize men that should be appointed. And the understanding is that they were appointed by the churches in which they served.

And finally, 1 Timothy chapter 3, verses 1 through 7. And Titus chapter 1, verses 5 through 9. 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 1. Would have no relevance to us today if we were not to have leaders in our churches.

Consider that. If we're not supposed to have leaders in our churches, these have no relevance to us at all. But are we supposed to have leaders in our churches?

Let's suggest to you, yes. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 17 says, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who have to give an account.

Given as gifts. Those who are going to keep watch over you. Who are going to care for your souls and give an account for your souls as a result.

[21:21] And so the church should recognize and appoint elders for every congregation. With much care and concern, observation and consideration.

We should be both recognizing and raising up men who will lead in our fellowships. That we might grow into Christ's likeness.

This is good for us to the glory of God. So who are elders? Elders are men qualified and appointed. What do elders do?

That's the next question. What do elders do? You'll find much of that answer in the previous answer. But let me expand now a little bit.

Summary statement is, Elders labor. If you're taking notes, I'll do it one more time.

[22:31] Elders labor in prayer. Let's go through each of these quickly. First, they pray. Elders pray. 1 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 1. We read already this verse. First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people. Elders recognize that without prayer, nothing happens. Elders recognize that apart from the power of God at work in our church, we can do no beneficial thing.

And so elders pray and we lead out in prayer. Acts chapter 6 and verse 4. Just after the first deacons are appointed, because the apostles were being troubled by this issue of feud distribution, which was an important issue.

It needed to be addressed. But rather than getting mixed up with that administration, they appointed men to do that work. And then they, here we see in verse 4 of Acts 6, said, But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

[24:02] We also see prayer to be a particular ministry of elders in James chapter 5 and verse 14, where James writes, Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him.

It's an activity because we know we need God's power in the other ministry, the preaching of the Word, but also because it is a ministry itself that we would pray for those who need help in our congregations.

So elders pray. Second, elders pursue holiness. I've said already they lead out in this activity. In Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, Paul instructs the Ephesian elders to pay careful attention to yourselves.

He goes on to say, And the rest of the flock. But he begins by saying, Pay careful attention to yourselves. Elders set an example in holiness.

What a weighty thing that we would lead out in this way. In 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 3, Peter explains that elders should be examples to the flock.

[25:14] And those qualifications particularly are a help to us. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Elders should be able to say with Paul, as he says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.

Ultimately what Paul is communicating there is that you should look like Christ. This is what he's aiming you at. But he's giving you something tangible. Something incarnate.

Here is a man filled with the Spirit who's following Christ well. And I can see what that looks like. I have some example before me. That I might get in with him and be like Christ as well.

Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 7. The writer of Hebrews says, Remember your leaders. Those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life.

And imitate their faith. So elders pursue holiness. Third, elders pastor their families. Elders pastor their families.

[26:23] I remind you of 1 Timothy 3. He must manage his own household well. With all dignity. Keeping his children submissive. Why? Because it serves as an example for how he will manage.

How he will pastor a larger flock. So we see the family then as this smaller flock. And he must do this well. Now I do not believe that this means that an elder must have a family.

That he must have children. Clay and Kathleen have yet to hold their baby. The one's cooking up right there right now. But if he does, he must first pastor his family.

And all Christians should be doing this work. Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This is the place that we begin discipleship. In the home. Leading our wives and leading our children to the truth of Christ. The contemporary pastor Votie Bauckham said this.

[27:32] There are many worthwhile pursuits in the world. He's a pastor. Note that. But few of them rise to the level of training our children to follow the Lord and keep his commandments.

I desperately want my sons and daughters to walk with God. And I am willing to do whatever it takes. Whatever the Bible says I must do. In order to be used by God as a means to that end.

So, elders pastor their families. If an elder is not good for his family, then he is not good for the church.

And as such, as a church, we should be careful not to require too much of our elders. We should be careful that we give space, time, that they might also serve and love their families.

Many years ago, I just decided I was going to put my foot down and say no sometimes. Which is so hard to do because I love you guys. But if I'm no good for my family, then I'm no good for you. [28:44] So, Clay's going to work on pastoring Kathleen and pastoring their new baby. We need to give him space for that. Time for that to be possible.

Fourth, elders prepare future leaders. It is an indictment on many leaders' ministries that they do not duplicate themselves.

And we see this happen in our culture all the time. A pastor leaves the church for whatever reason that may be. And he has not raised up a single man that could step into his role.

Or he has and the church just hasn't recognized it. This happens from time to time as well. But more often than not, he himself is not a disciple maker. He's not identified leadership quality within the church and worked within the church to see men raised up.

2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2 says, What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

[29:49] It's a good command that Paul gives to Timothy. Pass along leadership. That more people will be raised up. That the church would continue to grow in holiness.

Elders prepare future leaders. Invest themselves heavily in future leaders. We have had the joy of watching Clay do this so well for so long.

Decades. Investing. I was so moved at Clay's wedding by the row of men who were standing in his wedding party. It was like 50 men in your wedding party, I think.

A dozen. Something like that. It was moving to see this investment across many different generations of young guys that had come through the school and come through our church.

And Clay's faithful investment in them. And I'm confident he'll continue to do the same. This happens in a broad way. It happens in preaching type settings. Big teaching settings.

[30:54] But I am also convinced that it must happen in a specific way. The one-to-one kind of relationship where we give time for people to see our lives.

Not just broadcast the truth. But also to take that and then draw it in. That we're in relationship with one another. It's a good relational work that needs to be happening between elders and the congregation.

It is a wonderful goal to work towards always providing for the leadership of our churches from within. This may not always happen.

But it is a wonderful goal that we would really work at seeing who has God brought us. And who does God intend to raise up that they would give good leadership in our fellowship.

So, elders prepare future leaders. Fifth, elders protect the church. Protect the church. Again, 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 1 and 2.

[31:52] Here, elders are called overseers. Guardians. Right? They're giving oversight. And this is a really important work.

And I praise God that it's a work that often you don't see happening. There are lots of side conversations that happen in the life of our fellowship. There are people who have come here who would have poisoned the water.

They likely were wolves in sheep's clothing. And because we stood our ground on the truth, they didn't remain here any longer.

This is a work of elders that we would protect the church. Elders are heavily involved in our membership process. Because when somebody comes into membership of our church, we as a church are saying with the kind of confidence we can, Christian, yes, we can see the fruit of the Spirit in your lives.

And in a sense, elders hold that gate and help that work of bringing in people who are truly regenerate and very carefully keeping out those who are not.

[32:58] Right? Sharing the gospel with them all along. Hoping that they will, in fact, come to faith in Christ. Remember Acts 20, verse 28. I read the first part of it to you. Pay careful attention to yourselves, as Paul to the Ephesian elders, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he

obtained with his own blood.

The church is a precious thing. Bought by the blood of Christ. And elders do the work of protecting this precious thing.

We do so spiritually. We care for. We shepherd. Right? We guide. Titus chapter 1, verse 9.

He, this elder, must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught. Right? This is the text that we have before us today. So that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.

We're building up. And also to rebuke those who contradict it. Right? To say no. Sometimes this is not the truth. And to draw people to the truth.

[34:12] I want to share with you a quotation that Clay shared with me. He had said, maybe you could work one of these in. And he gave me a couple. And I want to share this one with you from John Calvin.

who wrote, let the pastors boldly dare all things by the word of God. Let them constrain all the power, glory, and excellence of the world to give place to and to obey the divine majesty of this word.

Let them enjoin everyone by it. From the highest to the lowest. Let them edify the body of Christ. Let them devastate Satan's reign.

Let them pasture the sheep. Kill the wolves. Instruct and exhort the rebellious. Let them bind and loose thunder and lightning if necessary.

But let them do all according to the word of God. So this is this work of protecting the church.

Protecting the truth of God that we would continue to grow in Christ's likeness.

[35:25] So elders protect the church. Sixth, elders preach. The word of God is to take a central place in the ministry of an elder.

This follows from our previous point. And it should take a central place in the worship of the church. It should be primary in the worship of the church.

The gathering of the church should be absolutely saturated with God's word. If you're not very familiar with God's word, you may not recognize that our songs are scripture rich songs.

I hope that if you're a part of this fellowship and as you sing songs, you'll begin to see song lyrics in the Bible. Wait a second. What's happening? They're borrowing it from the text to give us such beautiful songs.

So we pray the word and we sing the word and we preach the word and we hear the word.

Preaching, this work of opening the text and giving it careful explanation, is central to the ministry of an elder.

[36:32] Elders, after all, are to be able to teach. Now that does not mean, I don't believe, that every elder preaches in this way.

Like what we're talking about, this type of setting. But that every elder does, in fact, teach this preaching ministry of proclaiming God's word is happening.

And it's evidently happening in the life of an elder. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2, verse 15. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.

A worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. And then Paul, later on in this letter to Timothy, gives this charge to him in chapter 4, verses 1-4.

He says, So preach the word.

[37:44] And here's some ways in which you're going to be doing that. You're going to be taking this word and you're going to be giving it application in the life of the church in all these varied ways. And you're to do this with patience and teaching.

Why? For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The time is coming and is now here. People won't want to hear what the word of God says, but they'll want to hear what they want to hear. And it seems to me that what Paul is saying is that God's going to give it to them as a judgment for them.

You go, okay. Someone will come along and will scratch your ear for you. Will tell you exactly what you want to hear. A faithful elder wants to simply open up God's word and speak from this text.

A faithful elder only has anything worth saying if the word of God says it. Let me simply tell you what God has said, right? Because elders love the church.

[39:01] And they know that God's word is what the church needs. It's their real need. Elders are less concerned about felt needs and more concerned about real needs.

Ultimately, primarily concerned about real needs. It is not the job of an elder to make the truth relevant to you, but rather to show you its relevancy.

It is relevant. To merely show you that it's relevant. To do the hard work of taking an ancient text and helping you understand it. Right?

To go to the Old Testament, not to disregard it because it seems to be some obstacle to people coming to faith, but to explain it to you. To help you take this ancient thing and pull it here to the present and tell you what it means and why it matters.

Beloved, God wrote us a book. The job of an elder is to fix your gaze on the truth. Right? To put your nose in the Bible.

[40:05] That's why we love, typically, to do verse-by-verse exposition. Thus saith the Lord. Secondly here, preaching is central in the worship of the church.

Right? We need to note together the centrality of preaching in the early church. In Acts chapter 2, verse 42, They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

Right? Preaching that was happening. Not exclusively amongst the apostles, but it was, in fact, happening. Acts 4.31, When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

And what did they do? When they were filled with the Spirit, what did they do? They didn't do weird things on stage. They continued to speak the Word of God with boldness.

This is what the Spirit of God did for them. Right? They weren't making people fall on the floor. They were preaching. Acts chapter 6, verse 1 and 2, Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose.

[41:06] Oh, I read this to you already. Right? They gathered together. They had deacons so that they could do what? Right? They said, It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables.

Acts chapter 8, in verse 4, After Stephen is stoned, it says, Now those who were scattered went about preaching the Word. So we see the centrality of preaching.

Right? It's why our services are centered around preaching. It's why we spend the most time on preaching. Because the Scripture gives it to us as this example.

Elders preach. When we gather, we need the truth in large measure. Beloved, it's once a week. It's the Lord's Day.

We gather this time that we would be fed. We need a meal, not a snack. We need to be fed the truth of God's Word.

[42:04] Spurgeon once said, Surely, if men's hearts were right, short sermons would not be enough. When we gather, we need the truth, and we need the truth with reverence.

We need men to open God's Word to us, who love God's Word, who respect God's Word, who aren't concerned about entertaining you.

Dr. Morton, Louis Jones, great preacher, writes in Preaching and Preachers this distinction between the preacher and the pulpiteer, one who gets up and puts on a show for people's entertainment.

He, like Paul, who writes in 1 Corinthians 2.2, would say, For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Richard Baxter, the Puritan pastor, wrote in his great work, the Reformed pastor, Of all preaching in the world that speaks not stark lies, I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh or to move their mind with tickling levity and affect them as stage players used to do instead of affecting them with the holy reverence of the name of God.

[43:35] You ought to want a man, right? And I know there's some guests with us this morning who will go back to churches. You want to want a man who will reach back and take hold of these ancient truths with one hand and with the other reach forward into your life in order to bring the two together.

This is the work of preaching. Ancient truths applied for you today. On your bulletin, final quotation, I think, for this morning.

Spurgeon wrote, The true teacher should not seek to soar on the gaudy wings of brilliant oratory, pouring forth sonorous, polished sentences in rhythmic harmony.

And that's saying a lot because Spurgeon was brilliant. His language just burst out of him. It was beautiful. But should endeavor to speak pointed truths of God, things that will strike and stick, thoughts that will be remembered and recalled again and again when the hearer is far away from the place of worship where he listened to the preacher's words.

elders preach. So, who are elders? Elders are men qualified and appointed. What do elders do? They labor in prayer, pursuing holiness, pastoring their families, preparing future leaders, protecting the church, and preaching.

[44:58] They are a gift to us. How should we relate to our elders really quickly? I'm sorry this is going long. This is three sermons pulled into one, just as a side note.

The church, this is your summary statement, the church should honor and obey its elders. The church should honor and obey its elders. I'll give you a quick text for each of those.

Honor, 1 Timothy 5, 17, let the elders who rule be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and in teaching. Paul goes on to talk about the ox being, treading out grain and the worker being worth his wages.

So, I do think, in some sense here, Paul is talking to Timothy about the pay that elders receive for what they're doing. But that's not the point I'm trying to make this morning. The point is that you should want to love and serve your elders.

Show them honor. Show them respect. And I am very pleased to say, church, you do this well. You do this in heaps. Keep doing it. Do this for clay.

[46:07] Also, you should obey your elders. Hebrews 13, 17 says, Obey your leaders and submit to them. For they are keeping watch over your souls as those who have to give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. So there is an authority granted to elders. What kind of authority is it though?

What sort of authority is it? Elders have the authority of scripture as we all do. We're a congregational church. Elders don't rule in the sense of Lord over the church.

We have the authority of the scripture and we have relational authority. Elders in our church have served amongst us. Have laid down their lives for the lives of others.

Are seeking to do this. To rightly keep watch over your souls. To really care about you and how you're doing.

[47:09] Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5, We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves. So here Paul instructs that you respect your elders. You could also translate that word know intimately your elders because they're men who do work for you.

Because they are serving you well. They're in relationship with you. So the respect and therefore the authority of an elder that they possess is primarily relational and not primarily positional. people. So honor and obey your elders as your elders lay their lives down in service to you.

Christ is building his church and he is employing means to accomplish this task. Elders are a means.

[48:19] They're not the only means but they are a means and an important one and we should be exceedingly grateful for the gift they are to us in Christ. And I say that with you as an elder.

I am thankful for elders in our church. I'm thankful I'm not the only one but I'm serving amongst men who are serving you. May his kingdom go forth as we continue to arrange ourselves as a church according to his good and wise instruction.

Let's pray together and then we're going to turn our attention to installing clay. Father God thank you very much for your word and for what it has to say to us about how it is that you've ordered the church.

Father help us to be a people who care about ecclesiology who want to study how it is you have meant for us to be your bride and to grow in holiness for the praise of your name.

I thank you for this morning and what it means. I thank you Father for working grace in us to be obedient to your word and I pray this in Christ's name and for his sake. Amen. I've been very blessed to know Clay Naylor for a very long time.

[49:34] Clay and I met at a campus ministry event. He walked up to me and as I tend to do I was standing at the edge of the crowd and Clay beelined cut across.

He didn't walk on the sidewalk. I don't think Clay would do that. He beelined across the grass and walked straight up to me. If I remember right I was probably in river shorts and sandals and Clay was wearing Levi's Wranglers maybe and a big belt buckle and cowboy boots.

God's providence brought us together. We normally would have been the kind of people that were drawn together but we quickly found that we loved the same Christ. And we very quickly formed a friendship.

I think the next time I saw Clay he got drug into a meeting at that very same campus ministry where I was a little bit hot under the collar about something and thankfully he didn't flee from me but he liked the passion that I had for the truth in that moment even though maybe wasn't appropriately applied.

those of you who don't know Clay well Clay has cystic fibrosis and coming out of college we started a college Bible study just kind of out of necessity to be together and study God's word together Clay and myself and one of our previous elders who now lives in Utah and Clay was the one that said hey we should invite other people to come and we went okay and in his apartment in Dahlonga a few more people showed up and then a few more people showed up and a few more people showed up much of what our church is today kind of came from that college Bible study and things we were learning and growing in together during that time.

[51:22] During those days my wife and I got married and Clay's lung capacity was diminishing and diminishing and diminishing. We held that college Bible study in our town home where we would clear out the living room we'd take all the furniture out of the living room and put it on the back deck and sit college students cross-legged on the floor and sitting on our counter.

We had stools behind that. We joked it was the balcony. We would put 50 college students in our town home and Clay who had 20% lung capacity would open God's word with oxygen tank sitting next to him.

We in those days thought this is the last day we'll see Clay. I think every time we gathered together on a Thursday night we thought okay this is the last time and none of us were saying our goodbyes because we didn't want to talk in those terms but there were many visits that I thought I just don't know.

I don't know. His 10 yard walk from his truck into our town home would leave him extremely winded. Unable to talk winded at that time.

not long after that Clay was put on a transplant list and received a double lung transplant which is a phenomenal miracle that these things can even be done 10 plus years ago or about 10 years ago.

[52:49] No. Clay got very sick after that double lung transplant. within an inch of his life before within an inch of his life during the transplant and then afterward terrible case of pneumonia spent I don't have the facts straight in my head but in Birmingham for a month plus in the hospital in a drug induced coma just not doing well.

God has preserved his life and I just want you guys to understand God has preserved his life in part for us. How good that is.

God's providence is good sovereignty. He knew how much we needed Clay. His service and his kindness toward us.

Clay has carried around with him a prayer journal that gets retired and then a new one gets formed and a new one gets retired and he writes in the front of that prayer journal I think in most cases Acts chapter 20 and verse 24 which says but I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself if only I may finish my course in the ministry that I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

And Clay has prayed this would be true of him and he has exemplified this in so many ways. Right. Thinking that his course was almost finished. Pressing in being a gospel proclaimer to where he thought the end would be and then God would extend his life.

[54:23] And then he would do it again and then God would extend his life. And it's just astounding to me to think back across a decade and a half and to go Clay Naylor is still alive.

That is incredible. Right. And he gets in the mix with us and he presses us toward Christ all along. He is married now. Ever thought that would happen?

He's a well because of his cystic fibrosis. Sorry brother. His wife is currently pregnant.

How incredible. Clay Naylor is going to hold a baby. It's astounding how good God is. And joy upon joy. Right.

Not to make this better than any of those things. But just joy upon joy. He's God heaping up joy on us this morning. He's now becoming an elder of our church. What a cool thing.

[55:24] Clay, the task ahead is a weighty task. I don't know in many ways you've already bore that burden. But it's a glorious one. You have elders who love you.

You have a church who loves you. Don't forget that as you take up the task of under shepherding that you're still a sheep. Christ is our great shepherd.

Flee to him at all times. Kathleen, it's appropriate just to say a word of encouragement to you.

You're joining Clay in this task as his wife.

But this church does not expect you to be a female version of him. If you start to think they are, you let me know and I'll set them straight. We don't expect you to pastor the church.

But you are expected to love and serve alongside Clay. Know that your marriage will be troubled by attacks as Clay faithfully serves in the church.

[56:24] I think who could know the mind of the enemy but Satan certainly loves to get after the homes of those who lead in the church. But know that you have a church that loves you and that Christ has defeated Satan and has overcome this world to flee to him at all times.

You together have this weighty work ahead of you but it is glorious. It is good. It is worth taking up and reveling in and enjoying. And I'm thankful for you church that you've made it a joy.

It is not a burden to serve you. It is certainly a joy to serve you. And so this morning we are pleased to install Clay Naylor as an elder.

Having been nominated and voted upon according to our bylaws, the elders of our church are to be qualified faithful men according to 1st Timothy 3 and Titus 1 who will stand before God and give an account for the people of Christ's family church according to Hebrews chapter 13.

This is both a solemn and a joyful occasion. Now attach the back of your bulletin. Again, I apologize if you don't have one in your hands.

[57:36] Just participate as you can. It's a document for a responsive reading. So if you will for me church, if you'll stand and join me in this responsive reading.

In case it's unclear, you're the congregation.

There is but one good shepherd. Our Lord Jesus Christ. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

The Lord Jesus who so loves his bride that he gave himself up for her and still now washes her with the water of his grace.

As the head of the church, her chief shepherd gives to her under shepherds, pastors to care for the sheep even as they are sheep themselves. Thanks be to God.

[59:04] You can be seated. Your job's not done yet, but please be seated. Let me ask Clay to go ahead and join me on stage. I'm going to let you stand where the mic is.

Clay, will you teach us whether many or one to one in sermons and prayers and counsel the gospel of Jesus Christ? I will by God's grace.

Will you shepherd us not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not domineeringly, but gently being an example to the flock? I will by God's grace. Will you pray for us interceding on our behalf that we might comprehend with all the saints the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that we may be

filled with all the fullness of God?

I will by God's grace. Church, will you be subject to him, clothing yourselves in humility even to one another, obeying your leaders, letting them serve you with joy and not with groaning, since this would not be of advantage to you?

We will by God's grace. All right. Can I ask Doug, who is our current other elder, Kathleen, Clay's wife, as well as his parents, to join us on stage?

[60:28] You've got plenty of time. Just take your time. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. All right.

Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you that you have given the church to Christ and Christ to the church.

We humbly recognize that we have our very being because of Jesus' sacrificial work on our behalf. We thank you that you have placed him as the head of the church, that he lovingly leads us, working holiness into us and out of us for the sake of his name.

And we thank you that you have given to the church under shepherds for the same good. Father God, thank you for Clay. Thank you for leaving him with us for so long, for his constant faithfulness, for his care and concern for your people, for his patient teaching of your will and your ways.

He is truly a gift to our church. Bless him and Kathleen and their baby, that their home would be a place of rest and joy.

[62:07] Grant that the work ahead would bind them together in loving service to others and to each other. Grant Clay wisdom, we pray, as he gives leadership in our fellowship.

Grant him humility and affection for us, that he may pay careful attention to himself and to all the flock, that the body might grow being built up in love.

God, we want to honor Christ as a church. And so we pray this in his name. Amen. In the name of the Lord Jesus, the chief shepherd of the church, Christ Family Church installs Clay Naylor as an elder.

Church, welcome your new ending. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.