

Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders by Robert Thune, New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC, 2016. (68 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Leadership Necessary Anywhere.

Whether formal or informal, recognized or unrecognized, leadership is a given in any church. In fact, leadership is a given in any human society. [page 1]

2. God Wants Elder Leadership.

God intends for his church to be led by godly leaders known as *elders*. [page 2]

3. Terms “Elder,” “Pastor,” “Bishop” Used the Same.

In the Bible, the terms *elder* (*presbuteros*), *pastor* (*poimen*), and *bishop* (*epikopos*) are used interchangeably to refer to the same person or group of people. [page 2]

4. Elders and Pastors Are Equal.

One office—the office of the local church elder—is referred to under three titles: elder, pastor, and overseer/bishop. Some elders may serve the church full time (those we usually call “pastors”), while other elders may serve as lay volunteers. But biblically speaking, elders are pastors and pastors are elders. [page 3]

5. Elders Were “Hands-on” Leaders in the New Testament.

The elders of the New Testament churches were not merely figureheads; they were leaders, pacesetters, and disciple-makers. Scripture sees elders as competent, committed, mature leaders who teach (1 Timothy 3:2) rebuke (Titus 1:9), rule (1 Timothy 5:17), guard sound doctrine (Titus 1:9), do evangelism (Titus 1:8), deal with difficult people (Titus 1:10-14), and raise up other leaders (2 Timothy 2:2). [page 3]

6. Worthy of Imitation

Elders are leaders of strength, wisdom, and integrity, whose lives and character are worthy of being imitated and reproduced in every Christian. [page 3]

7. Men and Women Are Complementary in Their God-given Design and Roles.

The Bible’s vision of the relationship between the sexes is one of rich interdependence (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). God designed men and women to complement one another as his image-bearers (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-25), and his design includes differing roles for men and women in the home and in the church (1 Timothy 2:11-3:5). Men are given the responsibility of headship in the home and in the church, which means that the office of elder-pastor is to be filled by men. This is not a matter of empowering men and

restricting women, but rather of freeing both sexes to enjoy the beautiful, God-glorifying harmony of a robust interdependence. *Complementarianism* in the theological term for this viewpoint. Men and women are complementary in their God-given design and roles, with men bearing the responsibility for spiritual leadership in the home and church. [page 4]

8. Elders Strong in the Gospel.

In my experience, it's possible to be very old in the faith and yet tragically young in the gospel. If the gospel truly is "the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16) and is constantly "bearing fruit and growing" within us (Colossians 1:16 NIV), then elders must be strong in the gospel. They must know their own heart idolatry and how the good news of the gospel applies to it. And they must have a sense of "gospel fluency" so that they can swiftly, effectively, and clearly apply the gospel to others. [page 5]

9. Christ's Leadership Is Life-Altering.

If Jesus really does "uphold the universe by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3); if "by him all things were created" (Colossians 1:16); if in him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3), then clearly he knows everything about everything. He's the most brilliant leadership expert ever. He knows more than the most successful CEO, the sharpest leadership consultant, the most compelling movement leader. What Jesus has to teach us about leadership is life-altering. And "leadership experts" have been rediscovering it for centuries. [page 8-9]

10. Servant Leadership.

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45)

Jesus is *prescribing* for his disciples the kind of leadership they ought to practice, and he's also *describing* what he himself has come to do. Jesus expects his followers to be *servant leaders*. And he's come to make them just that. As the Chief Servant, he will give his life as a ransom to deliver us from selfish leadership and to free us to perform servant leadership. [page 10]

11. Apprenticing Ourselves to Jesus.

Jesus is our example. He is the ultimate Servant Leader. He is the one we are to emulate. He is our model, our archetype, our pattern. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have

given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15).

Following Jesus’s example means we jettison our false, flawed, self-advancing concepts of leadership. We embrace servant leadership as good, true, and beautiful. And then we *decide* to pursue it. We apprentice ourselves to Jesus and resolve that we will become servant leaders. [page 11]

12. Jesus’s Perfect Servanthood.

Once we decide to follow Jesus’s path of servant leadership, we begin to come face-to-face with the selfishness and sinfulness deep within us. Jesus’s way of leading is impossible! It is contrary to the bent of our hearts. We want power. We want control. We want comfort, ease, and convenience. We want to be liked, needed, appreciated. We want to do what works for us. We want to be served rather than to serve.

This is why the gospel is foundational to Christian leadership! To flawed and fallen leaders, the gospel proclaims: “Rejoice! Jesus has come to redeem you.” Jesus is not just our *model*; he is our *mediator*. The Son of Man came to serve selfish, greedy, flawed leaders. He died for us so that we might live for him. Our hope is not our excellent servant leadership; our hope is in Jesus’s perfect servanthood toward those who acknowledge their lack and their need. [page 11]

13. Christ Empowers Leaders.

When weak leaders depend on a strong Christ, he does not just forgive their sins; he empowers them with his renewing grace. [page 11]

14. The Gospel Is Greater than You Imagine.

The late seminary professor and pastor C. John Miller summarized the good news of the gospel using two phrases:

- *Cheer up! You’re worse than you think!* Your failures and flaws are even deeper than you know. Your capacity for servant leadership is smaller than you imagine. Your selfishness is stronger than you’ve realized. But ...
- *Cheer up! The gospel is far greater than you can imagine!* God is not constrained by your limitations! God uses the weak, the flawed, the powerless. God loves to pour out his Spirit on humble leaders who acknowledge their need.

[page 12]

15. Gospel and Servant Leadership Is a Cycle of Renewal.

Gospel leadership is servant leadership; and servant leadership drives us back to the gospel. We cannot be the servant leaders Jesus commands us to be without believing

the good news of the gospel. Likewise, we cannot believe the gospel without being moved toward greater servanthood. This cycle of renewal brings life and joy and fruitfulness to our leadership. [page 12]

16. The Core Sin Is Unbelief.

The core sin under every other sin is *unbelief*—the refusal to rest in the promises, assurances, and truths of the gospel. [page 18]

17. Church Leadership – a Plurality of Called, Qualified Men.

According to the Bible, *the church is to be led by a plurality of called, qualified men known as elders.* [page 21]

18. Serving Together as a Team.

A properly functioning biblical church is led by a *plurality of leaders*. Some of them may serve in a full-time, vocational capacity, receiving their financial income from the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14). Others may serve in a volunteer capacity, receiving their income from another job. One of them may have a “first among equals” role, while others may serve in less visible ways according to their gifting and calling. But whatever the nuances of the specific application, the biblical model of church leadership demands that qualified pastor-elders serve *together* as the spiritual leaders of the church, shepherding the flock and sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability as a team. [page 21]

19. Men Are Commended.

Some churches and church-planting agencies use the word *commended* rather than *called*. *Commended* implies that others have evaluated and affirmed a man’s calling. A calling to eldership is not merely a subjective aspiration; it’s an aspiration that has been tested and confirmed by other godly leaders in the context of a local church community. [page 22]

20. Scriptural Guidelines Given for Those Who to Serve as Elders.

It’s not enough for elders to be called; they must also be *qualified*. Since the people of the church are instructed to submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:17), God demands that elders be the type of people who are worthy of trust and submission. He protects the flock by laying out clear scriptural guidelines for all who wish to serve as elders. [page 23]

21. Terms “Elder,” “Pastor,” “Bishop” Used the Same.

In the Bible, the terms *elder (presbuteros)*, *pastor (poimen)*, and *bishop (epikopos)* are all used interchangeably to refer to the same person or group of people. There are

not elders, and then pastors, and then bishops. Rather, an elder = a pastor = a bishop. As noted in the Introduction, two particular New Testament texts make this abundantly clear.

Acts 20:17-18, 28, (NASB), From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders [*presbuteros*] of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, ... “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [*epikopos*], to shepherd [*poimainen*] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

1 Peter 5:1-2, (NASB), Therefore, I exhort the elders [*presbuteros*] among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd [*poimane*] the flock of God among you, exercising oversight [*episkopountes*] not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God.

[page 24]

22. Biblical Teaching – Plurality of Men.

The Bible teaches that *the church is to be led by a plurality of called, qualified men known as elders.* [page 25]

23. Apostles Are Church Planters.

The word *apostle*, in its broad sense, refers to those gifted by the Holy Spirit to start new churches and missions. True apostles (i.e., church planters) serve as solo leaders *only temporarily*. They follow God’s call to start new churches from scratch, and they see it as their responsibility to develop and raise up other elders to serve alongside them as quickly as God allows. [page 26]

24. Elder Definitions.

- The words *bishop* (overseer), *elder*, and *pastor* all refer in Scripture to the same office.
- The Bible sees elders as part of the flock, not separate from it.
- Elders are to serve in a particular local church.

[page 27]

25. Overseeing a Local Church.

Elders exercise oversight of *a particular local church*. There is no such thing as an elder who has no specific flock. [page 27]

26. Elders as a Governing Boards.

The third faulty model of leadership is the CEO/Board Model. In this model, which closely mirrors corporate governance, the pastor functions as the CEO or “point leader” of the church. The elders are not seen as pastors, but rather sort of “governing board” whose job is to keep the pastors in check and provide a system of checks and balances (lest the ministry staff or pastors have too much power).

This model of church leadership persists even in many churches that agree (on paper) with the biblical teaching on eldership. But as Alexander Strauch observes, “the contemporary, church-board concept of eldership is *irreconcilably at odds* with the New Testament definition of eldership” (emphasis mine). It is crucial that we reject the other faulty models of leadership. Churches that practice this model are not following the Bible’s teaching on church leadership. [page 28]

27. Can Change Flawed Models of Leadership.

The fact that the Holy Spirit can work through faulty models of church leadership does not make it okay for us to replicate those models. Jesus is the head of the church. And Jesus has taught us how he wants his church to be led. Our job is to follow his blueprint.

Here’s the good news: God loves us no more when we follow his rules and no less when we don’t! We are not saved by our rule-keeping, but by the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Because Jesus has died and risen again for us, we’re free to acknowledge where we’ve fallen short. We’re free to tell it like it is. We’re free to identify where church leadership structures are flawed and faulty and unhealthy. And we’re free to change those structures—not just to “get things right,” but to enter more deeply into the joy of our Father, and to better honor and glorify our great Lord and Savior. [page 28-29]

28. Christlike Character Needed for Spiritual Leadership.

The cultivation of Christlike character is essential to spiritual leadership. And this is why the gospel is essential to spiritual leadership. Admitting the flaws and weaknesses in your character, and trusting God to transform them, is going to take a big view of God’s grace and a firm grasp of your identity in Christ. [page 35]

29. Character.

- *Character is formed over time.* The English word *character* comes from a Greek and Latin term that describes the mark left by an engraving tool. It is how you have been etched, marked, formed. Christian philosopher Dallas Willard defines character as “who a person is and what they can be counted on to do.”
- *Character is discerned in community.*

- *Character is best evaluated under pressure.*
- *Character and wisdom usually go together.* People who have cultivated biblical wisdom—that sense of patient, keen insight and discernment into life—have usually also applied that wisdom to themselves, which in turn has led to the development of godly character. This why Proverbs urges so strongly: “Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7, NIV) [page 35-36]

30. Repentance – the Life of Believer.

There is no change without repentance. And repentance is not a one-and-done action step, but an ongoing discipline. This is why Martin Luther observed, “Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said ‘Repent,’ willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.” [page 37]

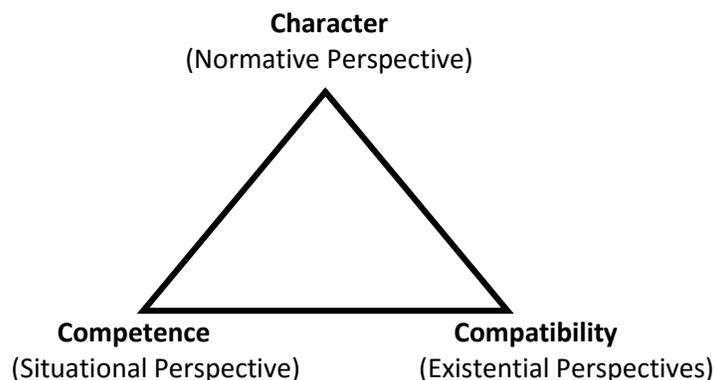
31. Spiritual Disciplines Needed for Godly Character.

“If you haven’t built a consistent habitual practice of spiritual disciplines, you shouldn’t expect to grow in godly character.” [page 39]

32. Idols Taking God’s Place.

An idol, in the words of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, is “anything in our lives that occupies the place that should be occupied by God alone. Anything that ... is central in my life, anything that seems to me...essential...An idol is anything by which I live and on which I depend, anything that...holds such a controlling position in my life that...it moves and rouses and attracts so much of my time and attention, my energy and money.” [page 40]

33. Leadership Triangle.



This “leadership triangle” is based on the Christian epistemology of Dr. John Frame (whose contribution in this area is sometimes called *triperspectivalism*). Frame observes that the Bible reveals God’s lordship three lenses or perspectives. For God to

be Lord means He is in *control* of every situation; he is the ultimate *authority*; and he is *present* with his people (in both blessing and judgment). [page 44]

34. God’s Authority, God’s Control, and God’s Presence.

A good human leader lives under God’s *authority* (character); extends God’s *control* by applying His Word to particular situations (competence); and manifests God’s *presence* among His people (compatibility). [page 44]

35. Responsibilities of Eldership.

Alexander Strauch’s basic outline, from his book *Biblical Eldership*, ... summarizes the responsibilities of eldership as *protecting, leading, feeding, and caring for* God’s flock. [page 56]

36. Elders Are Shepherds of Gods Flock.

The Bible is relentless about this language of shepherding. The Psalms refer to God as our shepherd (Psalm 23:1). The prophets refer to Israel’s leaders as “the shepherds of Israel” (Ezekiel 34:2). Jesus is called the “chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4). And Peter urges the elders to “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2). Rather than inventing new terms that suit our cultural disposition, we’re wiser to stick with the Bible’s terminology and do the hard work of discerning how it speaks to our context.

Elders *are* shepherds of God’s flock. We work for Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, who is returning to evaluate how we’ve done with his sheep (12 Peter 5:4; 2 Corinthians 5:10). That ought to fill you with awe and worship, and spur you to be painstakingly diligent in fulfilling your responsibilities.

So, following Strauch, we can summarize an elder’s calling according to four basic categories:

- Elders *feed* God’s flock: by treasuring *God’s Word* and teaching it to others.
- Elders *lead* God’s flock: by being *examples* in both character and skill.
- Elders *protect* God’s flock: from false teachers and from spiritual apathy and sin.
- Elders *care for* God’s flock: by *encouraging them in the gospel* through all kinds of life circumstances.

[pages 56-57]

37. Starving in Unfaithfulness.

Scripture teaches that God judges unfaithful churches by causing them to starve for His word.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.” (Amos 8:11-12, NASB) [page 59]

38. Men of the Word.

Elders must be men of the Word. They must love, treasure, memorize, and mediate on the Scriptures. Like the first apostles, they must “devote [themselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). And what makes an elder devoted to the Word is a deep awareness of his own need! A gospel-gripped elder knows how lost he is without the sanctifying, purifying, clarifying truth of God’s Word. He knows how prone he is to lean on technique, experience, and intuition rather than on “the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). And he seeks the Spirit’s renewing grace to continually awaken a deeper love for the Word. [page 60]

39. Sing the Word.

In our day, we have delegated singing to “the professionals”—the worship musicians who lead our corporate gatherings. And certainly some people are more gifted musically than others! But singing is for all God’s people (Psalm 33:1; Revelation 15:3). Elders who are Bible-saturated and gospel transformed will find Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs rising up in their hearts. Whether alone with a guitar or gathered with God’s people, they will sing exuberantly and joyfully. They will be the lead worshipers in the church, pouring out their hearts and their songs to God in ways that others can see and hear. [page 61]

40. Leaders Deals in Unseen Potentials.

Skillful shepherds will lead the sheep. They will not be content for the flock to remain as they are, nor even to manage them more efficiently. They will seek their progress, individually and corporately, towards maturity. They will not be managers, for managers deal with seen realities, but leaders, for leaders deal in unseen potentials. – Derek Tidball, *Skillful Shepherds* [page 68]

41. Importance of Character.

Even non-Christians observers recognize the importance of character. Lord B.L. Montgomery wrote: “Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, *and the character which inspires confidence.*” Dr. Sax, in his insightful book *Boys Adrift*, notes that boys become men by “[taking] their cues from grownups they see around them...boys are looking for models of mature adulthood.” In Sax’s estimation, the cultural epidemic of unmotivated, underachieving young men is

due in part to “the devaluation and disintegration of the masculine ideal.” If boys do not have men of strong character to learn from, they will not become men of strong character themselves. [page 69]

42. A Disciple Maker.

To be “able to teach” is *to be a disciple-maker*. An elder who is “able to teach” is an elder who passes on the faith to others. He makes disciples who make other disciples. If he doesn’t do this, he’s not qualified to be an elder. [page 71]

43. Leading with Integrity of Heart.

There is only one leader in all the Bible who truly led with integrity of heart—who had “no deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:9). And there’s only one leader who had perfect skill: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice” (Isaiah 42:3). Our hope is not in our integrity and skill, but in Jesus’s integrity and skill. As we look to Jesus, and point others to him through our leadership, we will find ourselves both humbled (so that we can honestly admit the gaps in our character and skill) and strengthened (so that we can earnestly pursue growth in character and skill). [page 71]

44. Watch Self and Teaching.

Paul urged Timothy, “Keep a close watch on *yourself* and on the teaching” (1 Timothy 4:16). As the revered English commentator Matthew Henry observed, “Those are not likely to be skilled or faithful keepers of the vineyards of others who do not keep their own.” [page 83]

45. A Love for God.

The greatest temptation of leadership is to exalt *doing* over *being*. Sure, good leaders get stuff done, but effective ministry is always an overflow of a heart aflame with love for God. [page 84]

46. Mortify Sin

As John Owen wrote: “Since it is our duty to mortify sin (Romans 8:13) ...we must be at work! He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, does but half his work.” [page 84]

47. Aggressively Guard the Church.

Paul charged the elders in Ephesus to “Be on guard for yourselves...*be on the alert*” (Acts 20:28, 31, nasb). The Greek verb used here has the sense of constant, ongoing vigilance. Elders are first of all to keep watch over their own souls and make sure they are rooted in sound doctrine. Additionally, they are to guard the church by aggressively

and swiftly confronting false teachers, “rebuking those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). [page 85]

48. Knowing and Treasuring Jesus Christ.

The idea of guarding sound doctrine can easily be misunderstood as enforcing doctrinal conformity, as if the goal is for your whole church to be able to pass a doctrinal exam. But doctrine is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. And the end is knowing and treasuring Jesus Christ! Sound doctrine gives people a clear vision of Jesus, so that they can know him more fully, trust him more boldly, and enjoy him more deeply. [page 87]

49. Growth by Faith.

The Christian grows by faith, and faith needs truth for it to be laid hold of. When the “full dimensions” of God’s grace in Christ are not clearly taught—through sound doctrine and good, robust biblical teaching—then faith is left with nothing to apprehend or lay hold of. As a result, the spiritual life of God’s people will suffer. [page 87-88]

50. Concern for Doctrine.

We care about doctrine because we want Christians to trust Jesus Christ more deeply and experience more of his power in their lives. [page 88]

51. Protecting the Flock.

Protecting the flock means consistently dealing with false teachers, unrepentant sinners, and difficult people—which inevitable leads to conflict. As the leaders and pacesetters for the church, it’s crucial that elders are holy and healthy in conflict, neither passive and timid nor harsh and overbearing. [page 89]

52. The Elder’s Work.

The book of 1 Thessalonians provides a practical summary of the shape this “gospeling” work often takes in practice: “Admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14, nasb).

- Some people are *unruly*—irresponsible, undisciplined, lazy. They need to be *admonished*: rebuked confronted, warned.
- Other people are *fainthearted*—despondent, lacking faith. They need to be *encouraged*. The word literally means “to speak gently” and has connotations of consoling, comforting, strengthening.
- Still other sheep are *weak*. They need to be *helped*. The word here means “to hold fast” or “to cleave to” in a protective, caring sort of way.

- With all these types of people, *patience* is required—the kind of patience that only the Holy Spirit can produce. [page 94]

53. Caring for the Flock.

Good pastoral care creates deep trust and confidence among the people you're shepherding. People will put up with mediocre preaching and leadership if they know they are cared for; but even the best preaching and leadership can't overcome a deficiency of care. [page 96]

54. The Church Is God's Missionary People.

According to the Bible, the church is *God's missionary people*. God's called-and-sent ones. Throughout Scripture, God's pattern is to call people to Himself and then send them out to display and declare His glory to the nations. The Greek New Testament word for church, *ekklesia*, replicates this pattern; it literally means "the called-out ones." And whom God calls out to Himself, He sends on mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (John 20:21); "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). First Peter 2:9 captures this calling-and sending dynamic in one verse: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Notice that all four of the titles in the opening part of this verse capture the rich Old Testament imagery of God's calling and choosing a people for Himself. The church is a people, not a place. God has chosen us and drawn us to himself so that we might proclaim His excellencies to those who don't yet worship Him. [page 102]

55. Elders Are Missionary Leaders.

If the church is God's missionary people, then elders are missionary leaders. Elders are the chief missionaries, the missional pacesetters, of the church. If elders are living missionary lives, loving and serving non-Christians, the church will be doing so as well. If elders are failing in mission, the church will not be missional. [page 102-103]

56. An Elder Leads the Church towards Cross-cultural Mission.

The Great Commission, by nature, is a "going" endeavor: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Elders lead the church toward opportunities for cross-cultural mission that fit the energies, resources, and aptitudes God has placed within the body. [page 104]

57. Repenting for Lack of Joy.

If we find ourselves weak in mission, the answer is repentance and faith. We need to repent for our lack of joy! Our hearts have become disconnected to the beauty of the

gospel and the majesty of salvation. As we turn, by faith, to rejoice again in the wonder of God's grace to us, we experience a fresh sense of the Holy Spirit's presence and power for mission. Mission is not something *we* are doing; it is something *God* is doing. And He invites us to join Him in the joy of His kingdom work. [page 105]

58. The Danger of Entitlement.

A position of authority always brings with it the danger of entitlement. Entitlement says "I shouldn't have to do X" or "I have a right to Y." It could be as simple as "I'm entitled to a good parking spot," or as complex as "I have a right to be respected." Entitlement always reflects a subtle works-righteousness: "Since I've done *this*, God owes me *that* (or God's people owe me that)." It's possible even to feel entitled to be an elder: "After all I've done to serve this church, I have a right to be an elder." Rather than being awed by the gospel of grace and humbled by the opportunity to serve Christ, entitled people are focused on their own merits and desires. [page 111]

59. Sacrificial Lives.

A life of leadership in the church is a life of sacrifice. [page 111]

60. The Danger of Greed.

Among leaders, greed often shows up as *a relentless drive for more*—more people, more money, a growing ministry, a bigger platform, a wider influence. Christians sometimes baptize this sort of greed as a longing for "kingdom growth." But underneath, it's often driven by ego and a thirst for reputation. Paul warns the Ephesian elders that wolves will arise seeking "to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). [page 113]

61. The Answer Is Jesus Christ.

How can you possibly persist in ministry for the long haul without giving in to these temptations?

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer. All five of these seductions are rooted in self-glory, self-righteousness, and self-sufficiency. So the way to defeat them is to allow our hearts to rest deeply in the glory, righteousness, and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. [page 114]

62. Jesus Has Given His Righteousness to Me.

My righteousness counts for nothing—my righteous deeds are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). I come bankrupt to Jesus and am clothed with His righteousness by grace through faith. Therefore, I have no "rights" to demand. I "deserve" nothing. Everything is grace. I'm not entitled to anything, nor do I lack anything, because I am in Him

(Philippians 3:7-11). I rest in His righteousness when things go well, and I rest in His righteousness when things go poorly. [page 114]

63. Jesus Is Sufficient for All My Needs.

If I have Jesus, I am rich, though I lack everything else (Philippians 3:8). I need nothing to complete me or make me whole; because of the love of Christ, I am filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19). I can be content in seasons of great comfort, affirmation, and ministry success, and I can be content in seasons of suffering and hardship and difficulty—because in every season I have Christ, and He is sufficient (Philippians 4:11-13).

It's one thing to believe these truths about Jesus. It's another thing to revisit them over and over again until they sink in deeply and begin to affect the fundamental “operating system” of our hearts. A life of gospel ministry is a life of constant communion with Jesus—constantly returning to this good news over and over again. As we believe this good news and let it “get down deep” into our souls, we find that the power of the gospel increasingly frees us to resist the peculiar temptations of leadership. [pages 114-115]

64. Functional and Formative Eldership.

Eldership should be both *functional* and *formative*. *Functional* means that it should be effective, productive, and helpful to the mission of the church. *Formative* means that it should contribute to the ongoing spiritual formation of the men who serves as elders. [page 123]

65. Accountable Before God.

Because eldership is the highest office of servant leadership in the church, it comes with a great measure of responsibility. Elders are accountable, before God for the souls of the flock and for the progress of God's mission. Elders should be the best leaders in the church, and they should be held accountable for the results of their leadership. [page 124]

66. Leadership Stagnation.

One of the greatest hindrances to movement is *stagnation of leadership*. Unless a church is consistently moving men toward eldership, sending men out to plant churches, and leveraging the giftedness of its leaders, it will become a monument instead of a movement. [page 125]

67. Qualifying for the Office.

A man can be *elder-qualified* without serving in the office of elder. Our aspiration before God should be to qualify for the office, not necessarily to *hold* the office. [page 125]

68. Seasonal Aspects of Leadership.

For eldership to be functional and formative, men must recognize the seasonal nature of leadership. They must be willing to humbly step aside if the needs of the church outpace their giftedness or ability. This is *functional* because it adjusts to the changing nature of ministry. It is *formative* because it builds humility and selflessness that younger leaders can see and emulate. A church full of men who qualify as elders, have served for a season, and have handed the baton to others would be a refreshing anomaly in a culture addicted to pride, power, and position. [page 125-126]