

Strategic Leadership Issues

by Bob Hoekstra

Leaders must navigate strategic leadership issues, including ministry to their own family, relationship with other leaders, and unity among leaders, while keeping their focus on the headship of Christ.

Duration: 56:45

Scripture: Colossians 1:18

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

This sermon focuses on strategic leadership issues in the church, emphasizing the importance of setting up the proper spiritual banner, raising the name of Jesus above all else, and enduring inevitable opposition and intensified spiritual warfare. It highlights the need for leaders to equip saints for ministry and leadership, maintain relationships with other leaders in unity, and prioritize ministry to their own families while avoiding neglect. The sermon underscores the significance of keeping Jesus at the center of all leadership endeavors, preaching Him as the message, and living in His name for His glory.

Transcript

All right, we're going to look now at our second study on church leadership. In doing this, we'll look at strategic leadership issues. There are many things in the Word of God that are very important for all of us in the body of Christ.

Some of these are especially strategic for leaders because of their role of walking ahead in front, calling the body after them, being examples, and teaching and ministering the Word. Leaders face many opportunities and many challenges that are kind of unique to being in leadership. And certainly that applies especially to those in so-called formal leadership, someone who might be called a pastor, teacher, acknowledged as an elder, acknowledged as a deacon.

But really, informally in leadership, too, that's true. Many Christians never have a so-called assigned, appointed, formal place of leadership, but so many people follow them because of the life that's developing in the Lord. And when people are looking to you for direction or insight or ministry or food from the Word, it brings up many opportunities, but also many additional challenges.

And here now, I believe biblically, are some of the various strategic common issues that face leaders. But again, though we're going to look at some issues, I think the Lord wants us to keep in mind the spiritual backdrop on all of this, which is the nature of the body of Christ. If we don't keep that in our thinking by

timing the Word, the reminding of the Holy Spirit, and bringing to them remembrance one to another, we just kind of default and shift into very naturalistic cultural thinking on how leadership ought to take place.

Behind leadership in the church is always the nature of the church. What is the church? A living spiritual organism, not a dead religious organization. So relationship to the head is vital and key and is behind every one of these issues.

It's where we really get the insight, the direction, the understanding, and the life to live it out. And then that life in the Lord and from the Lord, as we hold fast to the head, flows one to another. That's what raises leaders up, equips them, qualifies them, and ends up having them appointed if that is appropriate or practical or necessary.

And then even functioning as leaders, it's the head and the body situation in which they thrive and function. And these issues fit right into that arrangement. May the Lord keep that in the backdrop of our thinking.

We're not just talking about principles to try to activate in kind of a naturally learned leadership format. Here's one. Leaders' ministry to their own family, Matthew chapter 10.

Ministry to one's own family. This is a strategic leadership issue. Matthew 10, 37, and 1 Timothy 5, 8 give a couple of truths that can sort of develop intention in our hearts and lives.

Matthew 10, 37. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

It's an interesting truth that though the Lord has ordained family, family is a critical part of His plans. He is the one who established family. And in church life and leadership, it's an important part of all of our lives.

But here we are warned that we must not be consumed or obsessed with our family. To some people, their family is their whole life. Everything else is just sort of tacked on out around the edges.

Even life in the church and life with the Lord is just kind of one or two or three more ways I can have this greater little island unto myself called my family. And if our family has a higher place in love and priority and attention and interest in our own lives than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, well, that's not discipleship. Discipleship is following the Lord, delighting in the Lord, the Lord the joy of our lives, the Lord being our lives.

And then that life in the Lord is to be poured out toward our families, yes. But it's an interesting warning. From the God who ordained family, we're told we can't put family above the God who ordained the family.

And that's a good warning for all Christians. And this is a word not just to leaders but to all. But we're taking note of some issues that especially become challenging or strategic or vitally important in the developing of leadership ministry.

And certainly family life is one of those. Now, look at the other end of this spectrum. 1 Timothy chapter 5 verse 8, If anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

That's pretty strong language too. On the one hand, we cannot be consumed with family or obsessed with family. But on the other hand, we must not neglect the family.

For many Christians, a tension sort of arises there. And I think no more than in the lives of leaders. Usually leaders are the most aware that we live in two families at once.

One is the family of God, which is the eternal family, which really is the ultimate family. But within that family, there's this God-ordained, very strategic family unit, the household family. And we're members of both.

And we're told we cannot put the household unit family above the Lord who ordained the family or the Lord we serve. Yet we're told on the other hand, we can't neglect that family. And really, there are some in the church and even in leadership, their family is everything to them.

Well, that's not right. And yet also there are those in leadership who heavily, consistently neglect their family, give them no love, attention, time, interest. You know, it's just, well, they're there and I pay the bills and I stop in, you know.

But I've got more important things to do. And often for them, the big family of God or, really often, just their own activity in the family of God consumes them. And I don't think that there's anything abnormal if we sense attention in this.

I think God has built this in. There are a lot of things in life in Christ that just give us a sense of, oh my goodness, how am I going to do that? In fact, most, much, maybe most of the instructions of life in Christ, if we don't get a sense of real inadequacy, we're probably not hearing it or seeing it right or we have an overblown view of our sufficiency. And we've spent a lot of time previously, some of us, studying on this God's sufficiency for godly living.

How do we face attention like this? We can't be obsessed with our family. We can't ignore our family. Somewhere in there, there's a right realm of functioning that avoids both of those.

Folks often say, well, where do you draw the line? That's one of our, you know, where do you draw the line? I really believe that the answer to that is kind of a surprising one. I believe the answer to where you draw the line is this. You and I don't draw the line.

The Bible doesn't draw a line. 60% here, 40% there. 70 here, 30 there.

50-50, 80-20. The Bible doesn't draw a line. So what makes us think we're going to just go, that settles it.

If we think we've drawn a line, tomorrow that line will probably shift. What if you think you've got it pretty well going and all of a sudden your wife is critically ill. Whoops, the line has shifted.

What if you think you've got it pretty well set, you know, and all of a sudden there's a major crisis in the church with maybe a leader or two. Whoops, the line has moved. So what do we do? I believe what we're to do in all these issues, let the Lord teach us the matters that pertain in the word of God and renew our mind with just a big perspective of it.

And then see once again the critical necessity of walking according to the Spirit. God can keep that line of shifting priorities just arranged wonderfully. We can't, He can't, and it does shift.

I think it's good to be aware. That's why God speaks to us. Don't get obsessed with your family, don't neglect your family.

You have high calling to both if you're a leader. Where do you draw the line of commitment or time sharing or priority? It might ebb and flow not only every other day, it might shift throughout a given day. But ministry to our family, it's a strategic leadership issue.

May God show us the wisdom not to be obsessed with our family, not to neglect them, but to let Him take care of that tension and be the one who leads and guides and gives wisdom day by day. Here's another strategic leadership issue. Relationship with other leadership.

Well, this is a big one. Relationship with other leadership. Mark chapter 3. Mark chapter 3 at verse 14.

Then He, Jesus, appointed 12 that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. Jesus was going to equip a group of leaders and send them out to minister. But notice what He did.

He appointed 12 that they might be with Him. What is it that really prepares leaders for ministry? It's being with Jesus Christ. Yes, He was going to send them out to minister, but He appointed them to be with Him.

That's always what's behind real, valid, biblical, spiritual ministry. People being with Jesus, and that equips them to be sent out to minister. But think of it.

As the 12 were hanging out with the Lord Jesus, they were also hanging out with each other. And I think that's the profound way God equips and trains people for ministry. It involves relationships with other leadership.

Yes, in the picture of Christ the head and we His body, holding fast to the head, relating to Him, is the one necessary thing that we previously saw in Luke chapter 10. That is the essential thing. Nothing can happen without that.

Everything else flows out of that. And while other things are taking place, it all hinges on us receiving from the head all we need. Ephesians 4.16, Colossians 2.19. But also we're the body of Christ, not just individuals related to the head.

So Jesus called 12 to be with Him. He would be the head of the church, and they would be the leaders under His headship. But all the while they're relating to Him and to each other.

You can track it through the Gospels time and time again. The 12 hanging out with Him. But while they're doing that, of necessity, they're relating one to another.

And Jesus is using both directions of relationship. Their being with Him and how they relate to each other. To equip and prepare them for ministry.

Acts chapter 13. I believe is an interesting parallel of this in the early church. Acts chapter 13.

Verses 1 and 2. Now in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers. Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger. Lucius of Cyrene, Mana'an, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch.

And Saul, who had become the Apostle Paul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. What is going on here is a little mini picture.

A historical replication by the Spirit of what was going on with Jesus and the 12. Then He was literally, physically, visibly there with them. As they hung out with Him and with each other.

But here in Antioch, it's really the same thing. Though the Lord is crucified, buried, risen, ascended and at the right hand of the Father. He's still present with them by the work of His Holy Spirit.

And actually though they're there together to relate as leaders, they're ministering unto the Lord. So there they are, the key church realities. Right at the heart of the very nature of the church.

Jesus, the head, present and being related to. They're ministering to Him. But they're all relating to each other.

They're there to pray together, minister together as leaders. They're not just off individually relating to the Lord. So it's much like in the spiritual reality of what Jesus did with the 12.

I believe this is one of the great pictures in the early church. It gives us direction on church leadership. In many churches there are multiple leaders.

Out of those multiple leaders, there's usually a pastor teacher. We often call them the pastor, senior pastor, something like that. The lead pastor.

Fine, whatever the terminology, I think it's the biblical role being fulfilled is the key. The pastor teacher is leading by feeding the sheep. His primary responsibility, stick close to the head.

The great shepherd, the chief shepherd, as an under shepherd. Follow him and call the sheep to follow along. And feed them along the path, showing the way and nurturing them through the Word of God.

And there may be others there in the team that help in that. Sharing and mutual counsel, kind of like here at Antioch. But the picture is Christ is really the leader of that church.

The ultimate, to go back to our previous study, the church is a theocracy. It's not a democracy, the congregation leading. It's not an oligarchy where a privileged few are the leaders.

It's really a theocracy. It's God leading. And whatever kind of church government people come up with, and they seem to have a few kinds, it's hearts committed to that that see God do things in the church.

I think some forms of government are more biblically sound and valid than others. But whatever one understands as biblically valid, though, by the way, some churches don't even go to the Word of God to find their church government. They just look around and copycat what's been done.

And some of those things God has used and worked in, but some of them are not at all biblically sound and solid. But if folks are committed to the headship of Christ, that's the critical issue. Then you get committed to the headship of Christ and kind of shape the church government to fit the Word of God, which I think would be kind of a lead pastor, maybe for some time the only pastor.

And when I'm talking of pastor, I'm not thinking so much of staff person, but one who really is the shepherd feeding the flock through the Word. Then the Lord's going to work through that headship, through that man. And if there's a team, fine.

But the team isn't in charge of the church, the Lord is. And often in a church where there's 100, 200, 300, they're almost always more than one spiritually mature person who is able to function as a caring shepherd there. They might not all be pastor teachers, but they will have shepherds heart and be good elders and overseers.

And what do they do? They should gather in the Lord. Look when this strategic word came to the church. How strategic this was.

That Paul and Barnabas be separated from the church leadership in this one church and go out in the known world and by the power of the Spirit of God and the proclamation of His Word and the authority given to them in the Lord Jesus, preach the gospel and plant churches near and far. When did that strategic word come? When leaders were gathered together, ministering to the Lord, looking to the head, worshiping, seeking Him in prayer, listening to Him and, of course, sharing their hearts together. We don't know how the word came.

The Holy Spirit said, we don't know precisely how. Could have been a word of knowledge, a word of prophecy. This could have been a conviction the Lord laid on the hearts of leaders.

They began to share, you know. Maybe Paul and Barnabas or others said, you know, we need to get this message out. And, you know, I think God wants to send you, Paul, and you, Barnabas.

We don't know how. It doesn't matter how. All that matters is God did it and made it clear to the men that this is what He wanted to do.

And when did it happen? When leaders were together under the headship of Christ. It happened kind of like it happened in the lives of the early apostles. Jesus was going to send them out to minister.

And He equipped them by calling them to be with Him. And I think that's a strategic biblical leadership issue. Not only the one necessary thing of relating to the head, but relating to the head with the other leaders.

One of the great, great moments in the early history of the church that has profound implications down to this day took place in a simple little worship prayer meeting time where leaders were relating to each other and to the Lord together. It's really a place, I believe, that's demonstrated for us in the Scriptures where God guides His flock, where the shepherd speaks, the headship of Christ is exercised. And why shouldn't it be this way? If these are the spiritually mature, if these are the ones drawing near to the Lord, these are the ones hearing from Him in His Word, wouldn't they be the ones to hear such a word as this? It just fits perfectly, all that we've studied so far in leadership.

A couple of other things about relationships with other leaders. Romans 12.10, Romans 12.10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love in honor, giving preference to one another. This is a word to all Christians, to be kind, affectionate like a spiritual family, honoring each other with preferential treatment.

You know, you be blessed, you first brother. This is a great way for leaders to treat each other. If this is the way the whole flock is to relate, how about leaders? Too often leaders are competing with each other.

Jockeying for position. And you get religious coups, you know, takeovers in churches. It's sad, it's carnal, it's worldly.

Leaders should be preferring each other, treating each other like a family that loves each other so much, they just delight to see the other blessed in their leadership roles together. Ephesians 4.3 brings a beautiful flavor to that. Ephesians 4.3. Another word to all of us, but strategic for leaders.

We're to be those endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The church is one. A local church is unified already.

How? In the Spirit. We all have the Spirit of God dwelling in us. It should be our desire to guard that unity.

How? By living at peace with each other. Not fussing and fighting and hassling each other, but living at peace with each other. Seeking God for how we can just lovingly get along with each other.

Unity. Unity. How critical for leaders.

Through the years, the two churches the Lord had me pastor over those 25 years of pastoral ministry, as time went on in each church, some of the greatest friends God has ever given me or I had in those days were right there among the leadership. People talk about, well, you can't get too close to your co-workers. Now, wait a second.

That sounds to me like the world. That sounds like the world. That's where there's separation and division.

We're a family. I mean, I shouldn't get real close to my family? In my family, my wife and I are very close. As we lead that family, work together, help each other.

And as I take the headship role and she kind of supports and follows, you know, she's my co-worker. I don't keep her at a distance. How about in the church? We're brothers there.

And leaders ought to be the most mature brothers. Can't we get as close as God would let it happen? It's not a professional relationship. It's a family relationship.

Sure, at a given time, God might show you wisdom why this issue you just keep with your wife or a prayer partner. But that's a whole different issue for them. Some pastors just won't let people get close to them, you know.

It's not right. It's not right. We're the family of God.

We're brothers. And we're to walk in unity. It's a great thing for a church to look at the leaders just loving each other in one spirit.

What an encouragement to folks, you know. Here's another one, 1 Peter 3.8. 1 Peter 3.8. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion on one another. Love as brothers.

Be tenderhearted. Be courteous. What great guidelines for leaders.

This is for all of us. But how strategic for leaders. Particularly this, all of you be of one mind, lovingly seeking like-mindedness in Christ.

Of course, the great way to get like-mindedness is everyone desiring the mind of Christ. Not one convincing others or some trying to converse with and then coerce a few. But rather, let's all get the mind of Christ.

I remember early on in the church, the Lord allowed me to pastor in Dallas, Texas. We went from leadership meetings where we kind of conducted them as Board of Directors meetings with Robert's Rules of Orders and motions and seconds and arguing and voting. I mean arguing, not discussing the point, but arguing.

And even between meetings, lobbying to get the majority and all of that. And then you get an issue. Think of the days when there were nine of us in the leadership team.

You get 5-4. Well, that settles it. Oh, but what a weak way to lead.

Built-in division by the very approach you're taking. I remember the last time we ever voted in that church. We had a congregational constitution because we saw that in the churches we were all disciplined in.

So we just copycatted it. And as years went on, we kind of realized, where did we get this? And where do we see this? This has got all kinds of complications in it. And it just kind of breeds immaturity.

You know, and everyone votes, and everyone isn't really growing and maturing. And where do we see that in the words? So that's when we went in a long study on the church. We called it Seeking the Master's Plan.

Forget your five-year master plan, Bob. Seek the master's plan. That's when the church, how Jesus builds it, began to be formulated in our hearts and minds.

And eventually it led to a total rewriting of our constitution. And we wrote it, chapter and verse, right down, and changed everything that we thought wasn't biblical and tried to bring it in line. And because we were under that kind of legally, under Caesar and all, we had one last congregational meeting.

And the congregation voted unanimously to never again have a congregational vote. You talk about a miracle. I mean, this is God among us, you know.

And those are the great works of God. I mean, you can't do something like that on the human realm. I mean, the flesh will just kick and scream to the end and never give in.

But God taught us the head was kind of in charge substantially, and we had that one last vote, and we never again voted on anything at the elders' meetings either. What did we do? We just kind of hung out like they did at Antioch. Worshiped, studied the word, ministered one to another, and sought like-mindedness.

An issue would come up where there was obvious difference significantly. We'd just leave it to prayer. Okay, hey, that's God saying don't press on right now.

Just wait on me. And when we sensed the like-mindedness, oh, we just boomed, you know. And with what conviction and what unity you can move like that.

And you know the wonderful thing about that? It just humbles you to live under the headship of Christ. You can't make a group of people do what you want them to do, you know. Oh, man has his ways to try, but that's why there's so much carnality, division, strife, and dissatisfaction in so many churches.

There's joy in finding how to let the Lord lead. And he might lay on any leader's heart, you know. Set apart for me this man and that for this work.

And it's the Holy Spirit, and you all get a confirmation. And, oh, that's exciting. And you move out together.

I think that's really church government. It's supernatural. And I think it so far supersedes what is so commonly found in the church world.

We're congregational. Well, I'm sorry. We're Presbyterian, elderly.

Well, I'm sorry. We've got something better. We've got this hierarchy of Episcopalian, one level after another.

Boy, that's what makes it happen. Listen, what really makes it happen is the headship of Jesus Christ. And the simple appearing structure under that is just elders, deacons, flock.

And the wonderful thing is the elders and the deacons are sheep too. Remembering that helps everything as well, you know. There's one shepherd.

All of us are sheep. So relationship with other leaders is a strategic leadership issue, just because God ordained it that way. And because we live in a body with a head, Jesus Christ.

Then there's a strategic relationship with the church, 1 Peter 5, 1 through 4. Not only relationships with our family and then other leaders, but the church family. 1 Peter 5, 1 through 4. The elders who are among you I exhort. I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.

Shepherd the flock of God. Pastor them. That is, take them to pasture and be a loving, guarding shepherd as you do it.

This is given to the elders. And even, see, this is Peter the apostle who functioned. He said, I'm a fellow elder.

In the early church, the apostles primarily in the church where they were functioned also as fellow elders. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers. Now here again we're getting this multiple language.

Here we have the three terms, elder, overseer, pastor, or shepherd. All used of the same people leading the church, just like in Acts chapter 20. But serve as overseers, overseers, looking over the whole life of the church as contrasted with deacons, servant helpers who just look over a part of the church to help the overseers.

Serve not by compulsion, not because you have to, but because you want to, willingly. Not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. Not for what you can get out of it and even manipulate out of it.

I know how many church leaders tempted to use their place to manipulate personal advantage. God help us, it's not right. That's not how to relate to the church, but rather eagerly.

That is, what can I do to help the flock of God? Verse 3, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you. Think of this, those who are leaders in the church, they have lives entrusted to them. The sheep aren't people to boss.

They're people to care for and then answer to God concerning. Not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. Not bossing them, but showing them what life in Christ is all about.

And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Oh, the glorious benefits and blessings in glory of being a faithful under shepherd to the chief shepherd. The blessings will be eternal for relating rightly to the church.

A little further in strategic leadership issues. Equipping for ministry and leadership. We'll touch briefly on this one, Ephesians 4, 11 and 12, because in our studies that most of us have been through together, we've looked at Ephesians 4 in the study on the church, how Jesus builds it.

In fact, extensively we did. But a reminder, a strategic leadership issue is equipping people for ministry and leadership. Ephesians 4, 11, One of the great issues in leadership is equipping saints to serve God.

Breaking loose from this religious humanistic view that leaders do the ministry, everyone else pays the bills for ministry. One of the key issues for those in leadership is equipping the saints to minister. But not just equipping people for ministry.

There's another aspect we can add to that. We see it in 2 Timothy 2. Not only equipping for ministry, but equipping for ministry leadership. Leaders are not only called to equip the saints to serve.

They're called to be watching for new leaders, other leaders, more leaders, while they're equipping the saints. 2 Timothy 2, verse 2, And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these. In other words, teach the word you've heard from me, Timothy, Pastor Timothy, commit these.

Teach these things to whom? To faithful men. What kind of faithful men? Faithful men who will be able to teach others also. While we are equipping the saints to minister in the Lord.

We're also to be watching out for this process. Some will be faithful men who will take the things we pass on to them, and they'll be passing them on to others as a leader, a pastor teacher. See, Timothy was a pastor teacher.

He was to look for faithful men who could carry on the committing and passing on process. These things came from Paul, who was an apostle, but functioned often as a short-term interim pastor. And he passed these things on to Timothy, who then pastored in Ephesus.

He says, Timothy, you be watching to pass these things on to men who are faithful to the Lord. And you see a spiritual capacity and ability in their lives to teach these things to others. It's really the raising up of other pastor teachers.

So in equipping the saints, we're to be equipping as instruments of the Lord, equipping all of the saints to minister. But in doing that, also knowing some will be in the equipping process for leadership ministry themselves, and to watch for those leaders. Let's go a little further in strategic leadership issues.

This next heading is intensified spiritual warfare. Intensified spiritual warfare. 2 Timothy 2, the very next verse.

Paul talking to Timothy, a leader, a pastor. He said, you don't have an option in this, Timothy. If you're going to be used of the Lord to minister in leadership, you must endure hardship as a good soldier of

Jesus Christ.

Really, anyone who wants to be used of God, hardship is involved. Why? Because we're on a battlefield. We're on a battlefield.

This is not just a world in which we work and raise families and have vacations and try to get education and advancement and all that. Many view it that way. No, we are on a spiritual battlefield, and it's worldwide.

Our Lord is the victor, but the enemy still rages until he's thrown in the pit. He won't stop fighting until the victory that's won is totally applied over him and those who know the Lord. Meanwhile, we must endure hardship.

Why? We're at war. War is dirty business. It's hardship.

If you catch a glimpse of the national news, international news now and then, you see places where there's physical, literal combat with bullets and weapons or knives and implements of war. It's hard. People are hiding.

They're huddled in basements, and they might be scratching out a little ground to put a little garden in, but planes with bombs are flying over, and they're running for cover. Maybe their utilities are out and may be out for years. I mean, war brings hardship.

Well, we're in a spiritual battle, and we're soldiers of Jesus Christ. Praise God, the victory is ours. The battle is the Lord's.

But the battle will rage until the Lord returns, and on that battlefield there will be difficulty. And those who go into leadership, they'll experience and face that the most. They'll be out on the front lines leading.

Come on. This is the way. Leaders are on the front lines of battle, and God wants us to be ready to endure hardship.

It doesn't mean it'll be bitter business and we'll hate the day we started. No. It just means there's going to be tough things.

What are we going to do with it? Back to the head and the body. We're joined to Him. We can help each other.

We can find in Him what we need. We're back to the sufficiency of God. God's up to the task, but we're going to need to be drawing on Him, looking to Him constantly.

This is not said so people go, Whoa, thanks for the warning. I don't want to be used that way. Well, maybe some people are to respond that way.

They might not have a heart for the Lord, the things of the Lord, and getting on the battlefield in an intense manner. But it's not told to cause us to shrink back. We're told just so we'll be alert and ready, not shocked and surprised.

But no, there's going to be some impossibilities. This is war. But the battle is the Lord's, not ours, and He is fully sufficient.

The victory's in Him, and I can go through it by His adequate resources. Here's another one. Inevitable opposition.

Inevitable opposition. Woe to those in leadership and in the church of Jesus Christ who oppose the leaders of God. Yet there still will be inevitable opposition in leadership.

Anyone who's used of God to lead the family of God, the flock of God, is going to face opposition. And it's documented so extensively in the Scriptures so we would not miss it. Exodus, chapter 16.

Exodus, chapter 16, verses 1 through 3. And they journeyed from Elam, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation... Here's some congregational rule. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

And the children of Israel said to them, Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full. Yeah, you had it made in bondage in Egypt. How blind the flesh is.

For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Look who the leader is. Moses.

Oh, what a man called of God. Equipped by God through 40 years on the backside of the desert. And yet he faced astounding opposition.

I think of Moses. Oh, am I a leader in any way like Moses? My goodness. If he faced opposition, should I be shocked if I do? Should any of us who are leading in the church of Jesus Christ be startled, astounded that someone would oppose us? At this point, the whole congregation stood against Moses.

Of course, he did what leaders must do at that time. He went to the Lord. Now we're back to Christ the head.

That's our remedy. Look at Numbers 16. Numbers 16.

Verses 1 through 3. Now Korah, the son of Itzar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab and On, the son of Peles, sons of Reuben, took man. Some man gathered other man. And they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel.

Others followed them. 250 leaders of the congregation. Men.

Representatives of the congregation. Men of renown. Now here we have the Presbyterian leadership.

Now the elders are coming. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, You take too much upon yourselves. For all the congregation is holy, every one of them.

And the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord? Well, they weren't exalting themselves. God appointed them to that role.

God put them there. They were just serving the Lord. They didn't lift themselves up there.

What's going on here? Jealous, rebellious leaders are now opposing Moses in a very strong way. Moses and his right-hand man Aaron now opposed by 250 of the eldership. Sometimes that's the way it is, even in the church with pastors and some of their closest laborers.

Other leaders might rise up against them. Personally, I can give my own testimonies on both of these experiences. Maybe you can too.

It happens that way at times. Should it be shocking? No. The Lord's shown us in the Word.

This is the way it goes with people. This is the way it goes on the battleground. Sometimes the biggest battle on the battleground is the battle that's going on within our army.

Saints hassling the saints, usually because of their lack of intimate connection with the head and spiritual mature development in their hearts and lives. Now, that's not to say that every time we're opposed, it's a carnal opposition. There'll be times when someone will say, hey, brother, and they'll do it in meekness and gentleness and Christ-like wisdom and biblical insight, and praise God for that.

When someone stands in our path and says, you know, I love you and I'm with you, and I know you love the Lord and you're in the Word, but let me give you at least an exhortation and not an admonition. And maybe even at times a rebuke. Praise God.

Pastors, leaders, elders, deacons, they aren't above that. We're all under the authority of the Word, which means we're under the headship of Christ and what He has said. So that's fine.

But there'll come times when the opposition is jealous, rebellious leaders. No shock. Of course, the Lord had His way to take care of that.

It was pretty radical, you know. Just swallowed them up in an earthquake. Well, there's an idea.

Many a pastor may be praying for a mighty earthquake. Just split the ground. Okay, let's get on with business.

That takes care of that. Might not be that physically literal, but I've seen that happen. One time in one of the churches, the Lord had me pastoring.

Every elder rose up in opposition to where I was leading. They wanted to go kind of the way of more signs and wonders church, and I was just wanting to get more and more of the Word of God out in that congregation. And they rose up against that together.

And we had quite a meeting that day, I tell you. There was weeping. There was heartache.

There wasn't a literal earthquake. But astoundingly, within two weeks, these men disappeared. That's just the work of God.

I couldn't make that happen. I thought God called me there. I was convinced He wanted me to be there and preach the Word.

They were saying, hey, this is too much Word. You're going to kill this church with all this teaching. This doesn't sound right.

This doesn't sound right. So we were all done, and I just shared, you know, well, God bless you. I love you, and I know you guys love the Lord, but I just can't agree.

God sent me here to teach the Word, and all I know is, let's go off praying, and here's my conviction. I'll be there Sunday, by the grace of God, preaching my heart out like never before. All kinds of things could have happened between then and Sunday.

But God let me get there, let me walk in, open the Bible, preach the Word, and I ended up preaching there nine more years before the Lord led me out to travel and teach. The Lord's amazing. He's the head of the church, but I shouldn't be shocked that something like that could happen, and these weren't evil men.

I think they were misguided in their love for the Lord, but here jealous, rebellious leaders arose. We shouldn't be shocked if it happens to us. Look at Matthew 16.

It's almost like chapter 16 is the rebellion chapter, right? Exodus 16, Numbers 16, Matthew 16. Let's look at Matthew 16. Matthew chapter 16, verse 22.

Then Peter took him aside, Peter took Jesus aside, and began to rebuke him, saying, Far be it from you, Lord. This shall not happen to you. Oh, my goodness.

What's happening here? The language is almost like one taking another by the shoulders. No, no way. What's happened? Jesus is just talking about the cross.

He's going to suffer and be handed over and killed and raised the third day, and Peter's going to counsel the Lord and straighten him out, and he's very strong. He rebukes him, not just, Oh, Lord, that can't happen to you. He rebukes him.

Can you imagine rebuking the Lord? I mean, he's the leader. He's the head. He's the chief shepherd, and here's one of the sheep.

As it were, shaking the Lord. Oh, no, no, no. Not only do we, you know, get tempted to do that at times in our own thinking and conversation with the Lord, but think of this implication.

If Jesus faced opposition, what makes us think we won at times? And think of who opposed him. The very one who just a few moments earlier had one of the mountaintop experiences of his life and of all the Gospels. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Oh, Peter, flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And a few minutes later, he acted on, spoke on, that which the Father did not reveal, but flesh and blood revealed. Oh, you won't go to the cross, Lord.

I mean, sometimes a very godly, insightful leader can come right up to you and stop you short with a carnal rebuke. I mean, these are the parameters of opposition in leadership. Really exciting, isn't it? But that's our frame.

We're dust, you know. We can fall into these traps, and if such as Moses and others, Paul and even Jesus himself faced opposition, that's why I call it inevitable opposition. We will too, but we can always turn to the Lord, the head of the church.

He can sort it out. He did in these cases, even in Peter's life, he did. Let's look at one more.

One more strategic leadership issue. Setting up the proper spiritual banner. Maybe I should say in jest, for those who are in the Calvary chapels, this is not a study on how to hang the mare, not the dove, you know.

Setting up the proper spiritual banner. I mean, I like that dove myself, but this is a far more profound issue on whether you have that hanging or not, you know. We actually had one in Calvary Chapel, Irvine, but whether you do or not, that's not what this is about.

This is about what that dove speaks about, and it getting set up in our hearts and our lives. Psalm 20, verse 5. We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God, we will set up our banners. The setting up of banners, the statement of who you are, what your army stands for, who you serve.

What is the banner we raise in our ministries as leaders? We might be in a Calvary Chapel movement or a Southern Baptist church or some group of churches, and our tendency is to raise up the banner of the movement, and our banner becomes Calvary Chapel, our banner becomes Southern Baptist, our banner becomes independent from everybody, you know. We've got all these banners that we kind of raise up the flag. Well, if we're in any part of the body or collection of groups in the body that God is using, there's nothing wrong with praising God for what He's doing and giving Him the glory and thanks.

That's fine. But our banner must be God, not that part of the body of Christ that we've been blessed in. In the name of our God, we will set up our banners.

He's the one we serve. He's the one we fight and labor for and with and unto. And, of course, to bring that to the New Testament church, the banner we raise up the flag is the name of Jesus.

That's the name under which we serve, the name above all names, the Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18 sure fits that kind of thinking. Colossians 1:18, that in all things, He may have the preeminence.

Jesus is to have first place in every way in the life of the church and in leadership ministry in particular. Then further in setting up the proper spiritual banner, raise the name of Jesus. He's the one we serve.

He's the one we put forth always. Therefore, He's our message. Colossians 1:28, Him we preach.

We proclaim Him. What is our message? Our message is Jesus. It's not a philosophy.

It's not a certain theological tradition or persuasion. It's Jesus. Oh, a biblical theology grows out of that and should always be refining and getting sharper.

But it's about Jesus. He's the one who gets preeminence and He is the very message that we proclaim. What do we preach? What do we teach? What do we share with people? What do we say? We preach Jesus.

Not our preferences, not our prejudices, not our principles. We preach Jesus. Him we proclaim.

Also, our last verses, Colossians 3:17. Colossians 3:17. And whatever you do, do in word or deed, whatever you do, whether it's word spoken or deeds engaged in, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Whatever you do, do it in the name of the Lord. What does that mean? Well, the name speaks of the person and the work, who He is, what He's done, what He provides. And we can use that name because we're rightly related to Him.

So we're to live in that name, not just sign it on the end of our prayers, but whatever we do, do in the name of the Lord Jesus. If it's words, do it on the basis of who Jesus is and what He's done and what He said. If it's action, do it by His strength, relying on His sufficiency.

Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is all about setting up the proper spiritual banner, flying the flag of Jesus, keeping Jesus front and center, preaching Jesus, and then living in Him and on and by His resources and for His glory. No one should give more attention to that than leaders in the church of Jesus Christ.

I mean, this is at the heart of how we lead. It's all about Jesus. It's from Him.

It's in and through and by Him, and it's for Him. He's the banner we should fly. He's the message we should preach.

He's the resource we should draw upon. Let's pray together about these church leadership matters. Lord Jesus, we acknowledge You right now as the head of the church.

We call upon Your name. We look to You. We seek You.

We want to fly the banner of Jesus Christ and proclaim You. And as You live in us and we abide in You, Lord, make us the leaders You want us to be. Raise up in the church of Jesus Christ godly, biblical, spirit-filled, spirit-led leaders.

Let it all flow out of our relationship to the head and to one another as the living spiritual organism of the church of Jesus Christ. Spare us from worldliness, Lord. Don't let us copy the way the world picks leaders or actually leads.

So, Lord, we just submit ourselves to You and ask You to work in us and the church of Jesus Christ in these last days, developing leadership as You please for Your glory and service, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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