

# Biblical Eldership - Lesson 2

by John Piper

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of biblical eldership and the role of the gathered church assembly in church government.*

**Duration:** 44:11

**Scripture:** Luke 10:18, Luke 10:20, Acts 20:28, Romans 12:6-8, Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17

**Topics:** "Church Leadership", "Elder Responsibilities"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of leadership within the church. He references Hebrews 13:7 and 13:17, which emphasize the need to remember and imitate those who have spoken the word of God and to obey and submit to leaders who watch over the souls of the congregation. The speaker highlights the role of elders in shepherding the flock of God, emphasizing the importance of leading by example rather than lording over others. He acknowledges the potential risks of leadership, such as kingdom or empire building, but emphasizes that if leaders have a vision aligned with God's will, they do not need to manipulate or force it.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org). Principle number five. These are still principles that guide how you structure church government.

Not inconsistent with this equality of the priesthood of the believer and don't have a father and don't have a rabbi and don't have a leader because you have one rabbi and one father and one leader. Not inconsistent with that equality, God has nevertheless ordained the existence of officers in the church, some of whom are charged under Christ with the leadership of the church. So, we mustn't go the, I'll say it, the Plymouth brethren route.

Now, I may not know the brethren. Any brethren among us? Okay, now, correct me here. Just help me.

Because I probably put my foot in my mouth here. And there are all different kinds of brethren. But now, there are no appointed preaching elders or clergy.

Just give me a little one-minute summary of the way leadership happens in the brethren. Any of you? There is an eldership. A body of elders.

And on a Sunday morning, the congregation would generally look to them for a word of exhortation? Not necessarily. It could be the whole group. But more and more you're saying, is that because of a sense of biblical pressure or just practicality or both? Yeah, I think de facto.

Well, no, but in reality, the Holy Spirit does that sort of thing in any group of people. In any small group or large group, there rise to the surface those who are more or less gifted at helping people with the Word. Now, what I was getting at when I said brethren, and maybe my ignorance here should just keep it general.

Whatever the group is that would tend to argue that the priesthood of all believers minimizes the role of leaders, which this group here says there are elders in that group, and so that's not the case with the way I was thinking about it. But if you know of any group like that, these texts here I don't think will allow us to say all believers are priests, don't have anybody over anybody else, and therefore there shouldn't be any officers or anybody with any authority in the church. These texts point the other direction, so let's look at them.

1 Timothy 5.17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. So I would find that to be a biblical impulse pushing a group to say that there are some who rule or govern, that's a little bit of a loaded word, isn't it? Rule. Probably find a better translation than that.

Govern, oversee, and some of those work hard at logokai diklesia. I don't know if preaching is the right translation there or not. Just word and teaching.

Word and teaching. So clearly some of those exercise their governing status, or that's not a good word, office, as teachers. Not all.

And not all in that group have the same role in teaching, though they're all, we will see, to be apt to teach. But not all labor as hard in preaching and teaching. So I find my job description right here at Bethlehem.

That's who I am. I'm one of these people. And I'm expected to work hard at it.

I'm doing this seminar because that's my job. I preach on Sunday mornings because that's my job. That's who I am right there.

I find myself in that work. I'm one of these guys. I have one vote along with 17 other guys.

I'm not the chairman of that group. A better name for me than senior pastor would probably be preaching elder or something like that. But we don't pick here and we just go with the flow of tradition.

But de facto that's who I am. I am one among 18. I get in the fray of the discussion just like everybody else.

And when we vote and talk, I don't guide the thing at that point. I vote along with everybody else. I'm assigned to do various things, bring back reports and whatnot.

I do probably exert more influence in the church than anybody. I'm not naive about that. Just because I talk more than anybody.

I'm talking here more than anybody. On Sunday I'll talk more than anybody. I talk to more people than anybody else.

So I do have more influence than anybody else at this church, except probably a few women who pray. Influence, you have to be careful here. Influence, if you take it to mean that which sways a person's views, prayer may be doing more than my teaching ever thought.

So I must be very careful when I say I exert more influence here than ever. I probably better qualify that by saying as far as the influence of teaching goes, I suppose my influence is greater. But it may not be such that my agency in the kingdom is bringing about more changes in people's lives than some unbelievably powerful prayer warriors here do.

1 Thessalonians 5.12, just continuing on with texts that show that there are leaders in spite of equality. But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction. There it is.

Charge over you, instruction. 1 Thessalonians 5.12, pointing that there are leaders in the church. And Paul means it to be that way.

Another text in this regard. Hebrews 13.7, remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you, and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. So leaders, and again, a few verses later in Hebrews 13.17, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. So clearly there are leaders in the church according to this text, not just everybody having the same office or role. And then, lastly on point five, Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

So here's a group of people that came down from Ephesus, gathered on the beach, and he says, You have been made overseers to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. So he thinks of shepherds and sheep. Now I'm a shepherd, but I am surely a sheep.

And I am a sheep before I am a shepherd. And to me, to be a sheep is vastly more important than to be a shepherd. Can you think of a text in Luke that says something like, Be glad that you're a sheep before you're glad that you're a shepherd.

You know what text I'm thinking about? Exactly. Is that chapter 10? When the 70 come back and they're thrilled because God worked. Jesus said, I saw Satan fall like lightning in your ministry.

I think that's what he means. And yet, he says, Do not rejoice at this, that the demons are subject to you. In other words, that you have powerful ministry effect.

But rejoice in this, along with all the other saints, your name is written in heaven. I tell you, to be the sheep of God, to be one of his lambs, is 10,000 times more precious than to be a pastor. That's my ticket to heaven.

Not pastoring. To have been a chosen lamb, rescued from the thicket, and the wolves, is my joy. Principle number six.

Under Christ and his word, the decisive court of appeal in the local church, in deciding matters of disagreement, is the gathered church assembly. Here my baptistic colors are showing. This is implied, first, in the fact that the leaders are not to lead by coercion, but by persuasion and free consent.

1 Peter 5.3 Second, in the fact that elders may be censured. There's some process. Elders are not God.

There is a way to correct elders, and to rebuke elders, and remove elders. And third, in the fact that Matthew 18.15-20 and 1 Corinthians 5.4 depict the gathered church assembly as the decisive court of appeal in matters of discipline. Now those are my three pointers toward congregational church government.

And here I say pointers and not proofs, just because, frankly, I don't want to die on this hill. I really don't. I'm going to live on this hill.

I'd rather not die on this hill. There's a lot of hills I'd die on. Believe me.

Like I would die on the hill of foreknowledge of God. But, I'm not sure I would die on the hill that a body of elders can't excommunicate somebody. We don't excommunicate by the eldership.

We excommunicate by the body. We admit through the action of the body, and we evict or dismiss, either happily or unhappily, through the action of the body. Now the three arguments I've got here, maybe there are a few more.

These are the ones I'm able to pull together. The last one seems to be the most compelling to me. I'll read the text that point in this direction.

And they move from the weak to the strong, I think. Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, shepherd the flock of God among you, not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. There's just a spirit there that points towards, look, the church has to be excited about this leadership, and therefore there needs to be a certain kind of interaction there that might open the door to congregational life, that is congregational approval.

But that doesn't prove anything as far as the governance goes. Let's look at the next one. 1 Timothy 5, 19-20.

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin rebuke. Now he's talking to Timothy here.

Timothy is an apostolic delegate, you might say, or legate or representative in Ephesus. Here's where your Episcopalians would say you have a pointer towards the monarchical bishop. You have a Timothy.

You have a Timothy over a city who is to discipline elders in churches. So there they would say, see, you've got a bishop. You've got a district bishop.

Well, it's possible. And that's why I say I don't want to wage war on these issues. There are more important issues to wage.

I think you have to decide what you see here and then begin to structure your church accordingly. Or, if you don't have a church, and you're a lay person, and you want to align with the church, then you've got to think through with what kind of group am I going to align if I want to be in a biblical group or a more biblical

group. But I don't think we should assume that Timothy is an ongoing office that should be reduplicated in every district.

But rather, this points towards some kind of discipline for elders. Those who continue in sin, rebuke. Somebody's got to have the capacity to rebuke one of these men in the presence of all.

Now there, is that all the people or is it all the elders? So that the rest, is that all the people or all the elders, will also be fearful of sinning. That sounds like elders. The rest will be fearful of sinning.

So at least there has to be a structure in place, whatever it is, so that erring elders can be corrected. And if necessary, removed. If they don't change.

Yes, go ahead. I had never thought about that as a possible pointer towards congregational life. So he's assuming a kind of role that he shouldn't.

Give us the text on that and we can all check it out. 3 John 1, verse 10. So check that out.

Think that through as another possible way. And any other evidences that you have that might point in this direction we can share with each other. Let me read the last one that I have.

This one to me is the one that compels me. These two texts. Matthew 18, 15 to 20.

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. That's where we stake a lot here at Bethlehem on why we do it the way we do it. Tell it to the church.

It seems like the disciplinary dimension of excommunication, which is going to happen here in the next step. If he refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. In other words, remove him from the roles and treat him as though he were not a Christian anymore.

The church. So, there are many churches who interpret that to mean the church as represented by the ruling council. Because it is just so dirty.

It's just a dirty mess. And frankly, I would love to give it that meaning. I would love to do all of our disciplinary work at Bethlehem.

I think we'd do it better. I think we'd do it more quickly. I think we'd do it on the people we ought to do it if we didn't have to time it so that you hit congregational meetings and with sensitivity to being sued.

You have to handle these things with such care today. How are you going to get the congregation to act on somebody who is an adulterer or whatever? So, if I felt free to give the word church here the meaning church expressed through its duly appointed officers, that would simplify my life a lot. Our life a lot.

And I would respect you if you made that choice. Go ahead. Alone? I don't think so.

Help me with what you're saying. Did the apostles... I'm not sure. Did the apostolic band constitute a church? Is that what you're asking? I'm misunderstanding.

Right here. Okay. I now see what you're asking.

So, the point is being made that when these words were spoken, Jesus was addressing His disciples. Did they constitute a church? And if not, who was He talking to? Well, in His own time, I would guess ekklesia here, I assume that's the word, and check it out, would be the loose band of His own. But, that's a good question.

How was this to be obeyed before Pentecost or before the constitution of local churches? I'm not sure. What would your answer be? They constituted a church. Okay.

And I don't have any problem with that. They ate the Lord's Supper together. I mean, maybe it was... The way to think of it is as Jesus and John the Baptist were baptizing, a new people of God were being called out.

I don't know if this is the way you think. This is the way I think. That John the Baptist comes on the scene.

He looks at the people of God, Israel, and he knows this people are apostate by and large. I'm going to assemble a new people of God. And I'm going to do it with a new sign, not circumcision, and we're going to baptize here.

And so, he starts baptizing. And the Jews just go ballistic. Who do you think you are? We have Abraham as our father.

We don't need this sign. And he says, God can raise up children to Abraham from stones if He wants to. This is the new messianic people we're assembling.

Jesus comes along. He continues that. The sign of baptism continues on.

So, at least we could say, this is a church in the making if it's not a full-fledged, organized church. So now, what would the implication of that be for... Were you going to connect that with my problem here of how to do... Yeah, and how to do discipline? Right. They wouldn't just go to the twelve.

They would go to... They wouldn't just... When it says here, tell it to the church, they wouldn't say, tell it to the twelve apostles. Yeah. Or what would constitute a church in that setting? I'm not sure either.

There's another hand. Go ahead. Yeah.

Well, at least, the point is being made, and I'll repeat this for the tapes even for you, that the belief is that this ecclesia here in Matthew 18, 17 is the church of the new covenant, the church post-Pentecost, the church created by the Holy Spirit, and that they didn't consist of a church here. And I think that... We just have to realize, I think, the flexibility of the term. There was an ecclesia in the Old Testament.

It just... But we have in our mind something very particular about the New Testament church with its officers and its gift of the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into one body by the Spirit. We have all of that in our head when we say church, whereas the word ecclesia has a broader meaning than that.

And so it has expression here, expression in the Old Testament. God had a people for Himself called ecclesia at every stage along the way, ever since Abel at least. But you're right that as far as the full-blown meaning of church in the New Testament, it's after Pentecost.

There are so many different ways of handling problems in the Old Testament that fall by the wayside now that I wouldn't know how to answer that question. There's so many different structures. And for different kinds of sins, you go to priests for different kinds of sins, you do one kind of sacrifice for a different kind of problem, you're stoned for another kind of problem, you're put outside the camp for another kind of problem, you're unclean for a certain number of days.

I mean, it is so complex. And thank goodness with the turn in redemptive history and the coming of Christ, many of those things, most of those things have gone by the side. So anyway, there's an argument for congregational church government.

Here's another one. In the name of our Lord Jesus, this is 1 Corinthians 5. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, you Christians, church, when you're assembled, and I with you, in the Spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus, you are to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, as though it's not just the elders who do this. It's when the church is assembled that you all together do this act of discipline.

So, for those two texts and probably others that you could help me with, I would argue the point, namely that the decisive, this is principle number six, the decisive court of appeal in the local church in deciding matters of disagreement is the gathered church assembly. And I think that has definite implications about the selection of leadership as well. Number seven.

The local congregation, therefore, should call and dismiss its own leaders. Now, I'm saying that's implied in the preceding principle. If it's not, I don't know where to get it.

The local congregation should call and dismiss its own leaders. Now, in the Episcopal form of church government and in the Presbyterian form of church government, as I've asked around, besides reading, generally there's a kind of hybrid thing that goes on here. As I've said, now, can a local presbytery who ordains in the Presbyterian church, the presbytery ordains, not the local church in the Presbyterian church, the presbytery, which is presbyters, elders, from many different churches in some kind of synod, or what's the intermeeting? Presbytery.

The presbytery, they ordain. But I don't think they can unilaterally say, now you go to that church and church, you accept him. There is an interaction with the local church that the church does some calling there as well.

So, even with that form, and I don't know how it is so much with the Episcopal form where a bishop is the key ordaining officer and then appoints a rector or pastor to a local body. I would guess that that local body can also have a say there. Any Episcopalians can help me with this? Or anybody knows the scene? Uh-huh.

Okay. What you get the impression here is that church government really is a mingling of biblical principle with practical, cultural, historical, local dynamics. And we just need to be honest about that.

And not absolutize our little systems here because it's just not that clear. That's why there are these different kinds. Uh-huh.

Deacons, yes. Okay, the text he's pointing out that seem to point in different directions, just like Timothy, Titus appointed elders in all the churches in Crete. So, here you have a man like a bishop, functioning like a bishop, who is appointing elders.

And then you have Acts 6 where for the deacons, choose from among yourselves. Somehow, that had to be orchestrated where the people chose deacons from among themselves to do this particular ministry. Number eight.

The leaders of the church should be people who are spiritually mature and exemplary, gifted for the ministry given to them, and having a sense of divine urging, and being in harmony with the duly established leadership of the church. Now, that's a mouthful, and every one of those phrases counts. But we wrote this, remember, before we chose any elders or even decided to do elders here at Bethlehem, but we were on our way, and this was to be a guiding... So, they are to be spiritually mature and exemplary.

And here I just started the list, 1 Timothy 3, 1 following. We'll talk about this tomorrow in detail about what the qualifications are. It is a trustworthy statement if any man aspires, so there should be some aspiration.

It doesn't have to be expressed. It's okay to go to a man and say, do you find within yourself any aspiration, any desire, any dream that now or someday God might be calling you to serve this church as an elder? If that's not there, don't coerce anybody onto the council. That's got to be there.

That should be there. God should plant that in a man's heart. It's a fine work he desires to do.

An overseer then must be above reproach. And here starts the list of 15 qualifications as I counted them today in these next verses. And so, there should be spiritually mature, exemplary, qualified leaders.

Titus 1.5, the same thing, following. For this reason I left you in Crete that you would set in order, Titus, what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, and then 18 qualifications are listed. Just to show, I'm just mentioning the text to show that there should be a giftedness, a qualification, gifted and qualified in having a divine urging.

A few other texts to point in the same direction. Just this giftedness idea in Romans 12, 6-8. If we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.

If prophecy in proportion to faith, if service in serving, he who teaches in teaching, he who exhorts in his exhortation, he who gives in liberality, and so on. There should be a giftedness when it comes to teaching and leading. He who leads.

Or Acts 20, 28. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Now, we've got to figure out a way in our churches to see how that happens.

How does the Holy Spirit do this? You know, I've been talking up to this town like, well, we set in place this Constitution and we did these structures and we did these things, and here the text says, God did it. Can we say that at Bethlehem? We have 18 men who are elders. Can we say the Holy Spirit made them overseers? We should.

We should be able to give an account for how we submitted ourselves in this process and tried to design a discerning process that was the Holy Spirit's way of getting whom He wanted onto this council. That's really big. Surely it will involve huge prayer.

Fasting. Biblical. He inspired the Bible.

And so to follow the Bible is to follow the Holy Spirit. And so there needs to be, on the part of the aspiring elder, much prayer and a sense of Holy Spirit compulsion and urging towards a sense that someday this

will be right for me. And I believe that if it is, and we have spiritual elders, they'll discern that and they'll come together and then the people will discern that.

And in all that mutual prayerful discerning with prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit will have put in place His elders. Somehow that needs to be thought through and worked through. And if you're in a church that isn't as spiritual as you'd like, don't teach on texts like this.

Just plead with the people that we have structures and we have prayer meetings and we have disciplines in this church that will lay ourselves open to the leading of the Holy Spirit in these ways. Philippians 2.2 is a unity text. Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Now that's why I said at the end of that principle, number 8, that leaders should be in harmony with the duly established leadership of the church. I know we're running a risk here. And I've been accused of it.

So I know it keenly. We're running a risk of what do you call it when it's negative? Kingdom building? Or empire building? If you have a vision of God, of doctrine, of life, of mission, and it's strong, and it's powerful, you believe it's biblical, you want to preach it, you want to cultivate it, you want to build it, you run the risk of manipulating to get it. Right? If it's God's, you don't have to do that.

If it's God's, you don't have to ever do the political thing and strategize and kind of do the subtle lunch meetings and the little conversations in the corner and all the things where you just make sure what gets said gets said in the right places so that everything is kind of humanly calculated to get these people where you want them saying what you want them to say. That's evil. But on the other hand, I think it's folly to say, oh, what we need on the elder is people with lots of different theologies, lots of different philosophies of ministry.

That's chaos. Churches are wounded and hurt year after year because there's no deep, profound, united leadership in the church that's saying, here's the vision. Let's do it.

And so there's a balance there. And one of the reasons I drove with all my might for those ten years for a council of elders where I would be one among 18 or 20 or 15 or whatever is so that I could build the vision together with them through prayer and study into a group so that if I drop dead, it's not housed in a man, it's housed in a body of leaders. And I think that's true today.

If I dropped over of a heart attack right now, the elders that we have, and most of them are right here in this room, would not miss a beat as far as how to lead this church. As what this church stands for. As what the next pastor should have as his passions and so on.

If they do a next pastor like this one, they might structure it a different way. But I feel so good that the mission of the church, the philosophy of ministry, the doctrinal coherence while there's lots of variety in this church out there in the boondocks and a lot of personality variety on staff and eldership as far as theological harmony and philosophy of ministry harmony, there's a lot of unity at the center. And frankly, I will work hard to see that it stays that way.

I hope I don't work politically to see that it stays that way. I will pray hard. I will preach hard.

I will teach hard. I will pour my life out for those elders to help them see what I see. And then, they'll vote.

And they'll choose who the next elder slate will be to put before the people. They won't be my hand-picked people. They will be 18 elders.

This is something you may have had in your mind as to how we get a nominating slate. We don't have a nominating committee. Nominating committees are crazy.

They are the most powerful group in the church and they're usually unfit for it. The leaders of the church should be the people who test the next leaders of the church. They don't have the lassee.

See the difference? They are the spiritually gifted testers. They are a sieve through which you put every candidate for leadership because they're the ones who've been entrusted with the spiritual leadership. But then, once they've tested and talked and prayed and met with them and said, no, not you, and yes, you, they lay them before the people and say, you approve or disapprove here and you must have the lassee.

And so we, as elders now, we will need about four new elders the next year. We'll need about four more minimum because of who's going off and we have to have twice as many lay elders as vocational elders. So we're now hard at thinking and praying.

We've got a list of 60 men, at least, in this church that we're saying, okay, who Lord? And we're listening to them and seeking who might God make a calling. Go ahead. Right.

Precisely. There are three of those verses. Namely, one to Titus that says appoint elders in every city.

And one to Timothy. Do it in Ephesus. And then Acts 14, 23, Paul appointed elders in every city.

And my answer is, I've already given my answer, but let me try to restate it. Those are either apostles getting the church started or the apostolic representative. Timothy and Titus were part of the apostolic band to get the church started in Crete.

So, for example, if you planted a church among the mannequin in Guinea, how do you get your first elders? Well, I wouldn't be opposed to jump-starting a church. How'd you do it, David? Okay. You said that? You said that? Who do you think you are? Well, you are like a Paul.

That's who you are. But really, my argument is not that's apostolic, there aren't any apostles today, so we don't do it that way. But rather, these other congregationally... these texts that point towards congregational life and governance.

So it's not... I don't have an absolute proof. Just pointers. Go ahead.

You could view it that way. The question was, aren't you in fact appointing and then the body is affirming? We call it recommending. I think that's the word we use.

We recommend to the body and then they affirm. And you could use the word appoint, but you're right, the language is slippery there. I mean, clearly, we are exercising a great deal of authority at that point in deciding who will be put before the people.

But I think we're being honest to our principles by saying those people will have the last say so that if this body of elders, these 18 guys, start to slip into some heresy or some immorality or some financial shenanigans, and everybody in the church knows this. They can, in our Constitution, unseat us all. Go ahead.

It can. It can. It can.

I believe. I'm not sure of that. I'd have to go back and read.

But I think the way it's written, the congregation can almost do anything. Go ahead. That's right.

We don't expect any losers. Is that what you're asking? Choose four out of six? No. No.

Uh-uh. That's not what we're doing. That whole process of having slates of candidates that have multiple candidates for every office, I think, had this in its favor.

It wanted to give more authority to the congregation. But de facto, what happened was you're forced then to put people forward that you... you might be forced to put people forward who you think might not be fit and hope that the congregation see it, but in fact, they don't know them well enough. The eldership needs to be absolutely certain they've probed into these guys' backgrounds.

Nothing's hidden here. This family is functioning and there's no financial misappropriations and there's no deep-seated anger. In a big church like this, the congregation can't know.

It's just a safety valve to have the congregation say, Amen, we've done the hard work. Everything's hanging on our approval here, ultimately, as far as whether they're fit or not. I think I will not push you beyond what we promised.

And so, we will look at 9, 10, 11 tomorrow morning, and then we will take up just briefly to show you some historical things in the Baptist Church. I only put that here because I had to work really hard to overcome the notion that to have elders was a Presbyterian thing. And it isn't.

It's a biblical thing with a lot of history in the Baptist Church. And then we'll move on through these others. So, let's pray.

Oh, Father in Heaven, I thank You so much for these brothers and sisters who are here to think hard about the church and about Your precious bride, Lord Jesus. And I pray now that what we've said would simmer and that it would be guided by the Spirit and that it would be controlled by the Word and that churches represented in this room would be wonderfully blessed by each elder or potential elder or member going deeper into You and into Your ways for Your people. Lord, dismiss us now with Your help and Your blessing.

Give us the rest we need tonight, I pray. Bring us back with energy tomorrow morning, I ask. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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