Paul's Portrait of a Leader
2 Timothy 2
1242

Just want to share some simple thoughts, not really a sermon, this is kind of unofficial sharing tonight. But I couldn't help this week as I was thinking and praying and just talking to the Lord about Sunday night, I know we're in the series in Colossians and I know it keeps getting interrupted, and yet I feel that's of the Lord, because I just feel so strongly about certain things. And I was challenged to read a particular article this week in a periodical biblio theca sacra,(???) theological journal that stimulated my thinking even further. And I dug back into some of my old notes that I had on 2 Timothy chapter 2 and I began to just kind of meditate on it. I read a book by Homer Kant(?) and I read a section out of three or four commentaries and some things began to kind of fit into my mind. And I thought, "Well maybe the Lord would want me to share something of what the Bible has to say about leadership." Because I think that there are people in our congregation that God wants in positions of leadership in the church. Church cannot be any more successful than its leaders. You understand that. Hosea said it long ago, like people, like priests.

Everywhere I go they ask me, "What is the key to the success of Grace Church?" And I say, "If I have to reduce it to two things, it would be the ministry of the Word and the leadership of godly people." On the day that I first talked to people at this church, I was well aware of the commitment to leadership that's here. And I know that the future of this church and the future of the churches in our world, in our nation, is dependent upon leadership. Leadership is desperately needed on the mission field. It's desperately needed here in the home churches. It's needed in colleges and seminaries and all kinds of Christian organizations. There is a tremendous need for leadership. And it's my great prayer that Grace Community Church would be a place where leaders are raised up.

We have a lot of that going on now. Our entire staff, without exception, has come from within our congregation. And beyond that there are some forty-plus young people in seminary, starting in the fall, preparing for ministry. And there are many other leaders in our church, leading in all different capacities. And I am really concerned that we be a place where leaders are trained. That's why we have Logos Bible Study Center. That's why we teach the Word of God with intensity. That's why our ACTS electives are offered so that you might get what you need to grow and to be nurtured and to mature and to become all that God wants you to be. That's why we have training classes for teachers in all areas because we want to raise leaders up in God's church. And I really feel that this is the thing that God has called Grace Community Church to. People ask me, "Are you going to split up and found other churches all over everywhere?" And my feeling on that very strongly, and we've talked about this quite at length, it isn't our desire to start more churches, it's our desire to put leadership in the ones that are already there sitting waiting for someone to come and lead them. We see our young men going out and they go from place to place where there are good Christian people sitting in a dying or a dead church, or a church that's hanging in the balances and they go in there to become the pastor or one of the church leaders or to minister there, or maybe some of our people

move into a community and as lay people they go into a church and begin to lead in that church and to be used of God. And that's our desire.

With nearly 400,000 churches in America, we don't need anymore churches. Four hundred thousand is plenty. All we need are capable leaders in those churches. And the great prayer of my heart, again and again is, "God, raise up leaders."

Now I want to share with you what the standard is. What is the standard belief? What is God looking for? What kind of a person does He want? And for those of you that God is leading in this area, this is vital. For those of you who are not leaders, this is important that you pray and that you would know what is expected of your leaders.

Now I want to look at seven different terms that Paul uses in 2 Timothy 2 to describe a leader. And when allo seven come together, you're going to get a good composite of what leadership is. Timothy was a leader, but Timothy was fast fading in his leadership responsibility. Apparently from chapter 1 verse 7, Timothy had somehow gained a spirit of fear. Timothy was becoming timid. He had become side-tracked somehow. He was losing his confidence. And I know the feeling.

In 1 Corinthians 10 it notes that Timothy was very fearful and he asked the Corinthians that when Timothy comes, help him not to be so fearful. Timothy had some problems, a natural kind of timidity. He was sort of failing in his leadership responsibility. He had the problem of being young and in verse 22 of chapter 2, Paul tells him to flee youthful lusts and in his first letter he told him, "Don't let anyone despise you because you're young, but be an example." And he also suffered a lot from some tremendous opposition. The Ephesian errorists were just pounding against him and it wasn't easy. And then, of course, he suffered persecution. He was getting shot down. He was reminded by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:12 that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus are going to suffer persecution. So that natural timidity, the fact of his youth and because he was young he had normal passions and he loved a good argument, and he was impatient and he was self-centered, and all that, yet he was having some tough oppositions of persecution, and because of that he began to kind of fade as a leader. He began to kind of fold up. And so Paul charges right into him, just blasts away in chapter 2 and gives him seven pictures of a leader.

The first one is the teacher. A leader is a teacher. Notice verse 1. "Now therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And that's really what he's trying to say to Timothy. Come on, Timothy, get it together. In the vernacular, "Get your act together." You're supposed to be a leader, Timothy, and what is this with all this timidity and this vacillating and this fearfulness? Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And here's the first thing you have to be, Timothy, a teacher, "And the things that thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." Commit yourself all over again, Timothy, to the first priority of a leader, that is somebody who imparts truth. One way to be strengthened in grace...and boy, do I know this...one way to be strengthened in grace is to transmit truth to others because sooner or later as you teach others the truth, it's going to reap a harvest in your own life.

Paul is saying, "Be a teacher." And then he says, secondly, "Timothy, produce teachers." Leaders should be people who can impart truth and make teachers, teacher-makers. And Paul is like a relay runner. And he hands the baton to Timothy and he says, "Timothy, take the truth that I've handed to you and run with it and hand it to somebody else." See. Same things you've heard from me, the same commit to faithful men who will take the baton and run with it and hand it to somebody else.

You have four runners in that relay right there. Paul, Timothy, the people he teaches and the people they teach...the deposit which is entrusted to you must be deposited with others. Be a teacher. A leader is somebody who is a teacher maker who imparts truth to somebody else who then in turn can impart it to somebody else.

We're not necessarily talking about the special gift of teaching, or the office of teacher. But simply the fact that all true biblical leaders have a solid knowledge of the truth and are able to impart it to somebody else, so much so that they can impart it to somebody else. That is the only true apostolic succession...the faithful proclamation of the apostolic teaching without addition or alteration. You take what I taught you and give it to somebody else, and somebody else. There's no adulteration of the original message.

Now a leader knows this, you can't just spend your time on anybody. So look what he said, "The same commit thou to...what?...faithful men who shall be...what?...able to teach." A leader soon learns that his priority is to find faithful people who have ability. The role of a leader is to deal with two groups of people...faithful and able people. It's impossible for me, for example, to pour out my life individually into all of your lives. Just in this room alone there's probably 1400 of you and I don't know how much over watching on the closed circuit system. Now I cannot pour myself into you and certainly when we have 3500 or 4,000 people here on Sunday morning, I can't individually pour myself into you. But there are some among you who are specially faithful, who are specially able and God draws them to my attention and into their lives do I pour myself. And you need to look around you and find those same people, faithful, able people.

What does it mean to be faithful? Reliable, trustworthy people who will not handle the truth recklessly or compromise it. Listen, let me give you a little insight. I only have a certain amount of time in my life and so do you. And I don't want to waste any of that time. And I don't want to spend myself, pouring myself into somebody who is untrustworthy and not willing to be available to God. So it doesn't take long to find out where the trustworthy and able people are who are ready to take it and pass it on and eager to do whatever is asked of them. And those are the people into which I pour my life. The faithful leader then is a link in a living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to Jesus.

So, Paul's first picture of a leader sets forth at least these essential characteristics. One, he is a diligent student of the biblical message and able to articulate its teaching. Two, he is loyal and faithful to that message. Three, he is actively involved in a training and equipping of additional workers.

What is Paul saying? Be a teacher. What does that mean? Study the message. Articulate the message. Be loyal to the message and pass it on to somebody else. That's what God wants in a leader.

Second picture, verse 3, a soldier. A leader is a soldier. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wareth and tangleth himself with the affairs of this life that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Now Paul says, a leader is a soldier. And the implication here is we're in a battle...we're in a battle. It isn't easy. It isn't a lark. It's a war. Now notice, "Thou therefore endure hardship." Now it really reads this way. "Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." And what he's saying is this, if

you're going to be a leader, you have to assume a willingness to share the hardship involved in leadership responsibility.

Believe me, there are some hardships in being a leader. Now we're not always experiencing hardship, but always willing to experience it. That's all he's saying. Be willing to suffer hardship. There must be in the life of a true leader an undivided loyalty to Christ so that he is willing to maintain that loyalty at any cost. It's beautiful in the Greek here because it says to suffer hardship with..." That's what the verb means...and the idea is to suffer hardship with me. Paul is saying, "Be willing to be a part of that company of committed, that band of Apostles, that band of New Testament preachers who are out there taking the blows and the rough treatment like the rest of us."

I'll tell you something. There are a lot of would-be leaders who wash out right there in verse 3. They aren't soldiers. They don't know what it is to get into battle. They don't know how to take their share of the pain. They're all right as long as it's hearts and flowers. But as soon as the war starts, they're gone. And I'm not here just to tell you my own problems, but I can say there are hardships in positions of leadership that no one will ever understand but somebody who is there. There are deep anxieties and deep hurts and deep grievings that occurred in the life of a leader over many, many issues that no one will ever understand who isn't in that position. And yet there has to be a soldier's mentality so that you just battle right through that thing. I think I shared with you that less than a year ago I went through maybe the toughest battle I've ever been through in my own life. And my own commitment to the ministry was just shaky. And I was struggling with some deep discouragements and some deep sense of failures in my own life. And I was willing to chuck it and go spiritually AWOL, you know? And yet the Spirit of God through the love and the kindness of some around me who prayed with me and shared with me and the Spirit of God energized me and I just went plowing right on through and I felt stronger ever since. But there has to be that. A leader is a soldier and he recognizes the battle for what it is. It's an opportunity for victory.

Verse 4 says, "And to be a good soldier, no man that is in a war entangles himself with the affairs of this life." You can't be a part-time soldier in a war. He doesn't get involved in the worldly things. Martin Giengrich(?) translates this to become entangled in civilian affairs. When you join the Army, you have a little bit of time to get rid of your business and whatever you have to take care of in this society and you are gone, man, and it's all devoted, time, energy, effort, thought, skill and everything to being a soldier.

You say, "What about Paul? He made tents." Yeah, that was part of his being a soldier. He certainly wasn't preoccupied with that. There must be a total commitment. Every once in a while you see a pastor who's got a desire on the side to get rich. Two things will probably happen. He won't get rich and he won't cut it as a pastor. The soldier is conditioned to be totally committed to the battle and you can't be double-minded. If you're going to be a leader for God, that's what you're going to be. You may have to work to earn your living, but that will never become your preoccupation.

Notice what else he says in verse 4. He desires to please Him who's chosen him to be a soldier. Listen, the soldier has one thing in mind, I want to please the commander in chief. This kind of obedience is beautiful. You know, a soldier out on the battlefield, pretty stupid to second guess the commander because he can't see the whole battlefield. So he leaves the strategy and decisions to the commander and he simply obeys and that's the idea. A soldier who obeys. Like a Roman soldier, he never gets preoccupied with what's going on in the struggle of the daily marketplace. He just stays in line with the commander and obeys. I think a truly godly leader cannot be tied to the system

of the world, but rather his great desire is simply to please the one who has chosen him to obey the commander in chief. And I think it means here too self-sacrifice, even to death.

Summarizing, what do we learn about the soldier? Several things. One, the picture of a leader as a soldier means he has heard the Lord's call and joined the battle. Two, he is willing to accept the suffering and hardship involved in his high calling. Three, he is separated from the world and its web of activities and interests so that even though he may have to earn a living, he has a single mind. Fourth, he is concerned totally with gaining Christ's approval on his service.

The third picture is the picture of an athlete, verse 5. "If a man also strive," the word strive is the word athleo from which we get...take a guess...athletics. "If a man also strive for masteries, or victory, he will not receive the crown, stephanos, unless he obeys the rules." Unless he strives, nominos, lawfully.

Now, he says a Christian leader is like a dedicated athlete, he is wholly absorbed in one pursuit and that is to fulfill his area of responsibility. I was amazed that all this commentary that's going on in these Olympic athletes...do you realize that in 99 out of 100 cases of those athletes, in order to get there they have done absolutely nothing but that one thing for years? Imagine. We say there's a guy out there and he takes that little four-and-a-half thing and he goes whisst....you say, "That's amazing." It's amazing but not so amazing if you think that all he has ever done for the last three or four years is stand out there and go whisst, like this. Now in his case, lest I be criticized for editorializing, I understand he has a full life in other things, but that becomes almost the reason to live. It isn't necessarily...it isn't necessarily the greatest natural ability that gets you there, but I'll tell you, it's the greatest level of dedication. Some of you might be there if you had spent three or four years doing the same thing eight hours a day all the time. If they had an Olympics for operating your punch press you'd be there. You've been at your job for 34 years, you've got that baby down. That's the point.

The point is, what you're dealing with, what you're dealing with at that level is a tremendous level of commitment...a tremendous concept of dedication. That's what he's saying.

If you're going to be a leader, remember this. You've got to work. You've got to strive for the mastery. Nobody is going to give you anything. And I really believe...people say, "Oh, what's the secret to your success, John? Because the Lord uses you and you teach, and so forth and so on?" And I say, "Hey, I'll tell you one thing, just plain hard work and all I ever do is prepare to do what I do." Paul says, "You've got to work at it, you've got to strive." And along the way he says, "You've got to keep the rules. You've got to strive lawfully." In other words, God's going to set some boundaries for the way you're going to strive and you've got to stay in them.

Now the word that is used here refers in the Greek to apparently a professional athlete, not an amateur. But in our day, who knows the difference anymore? But somebody whose whole life is given to this. Not a spare-time Christian leader. No, nobody ever really becomes a leader who is a spare-time leader. It has to be a whole life given to strenuous endeavor, to live out our faith in Christ in every moment of life. And an athlete has to have discipline, self-denial, all those things.

All right. And he has to keep the rules. Two significant things merge from the athlete metaphor, what are they? Number one, as a leader, an athlete leader, he must be a person with strong self-discipline

who is willing and able to conform his life to God's rules. Secondly, he must want to win. Motivated by future reward, not present pleasure...notice he will strive for the mastery and the crown.

Listen, one thing you learn real fast as an athlete is it's no fun getting there, it's only fun when you win. It's not fun to go out day after day after day after day until you ache all over. That's not fun. What's fun is to win and to gain the prize. And that's what Paul is saying. A leader must be one who wants to win and his motive is not present pleasure but future reward. You see? He's looking at what God is going to say when He says, "Well done," more than what he might be enjoying right now. And if you're really sold out in the area of leadership, you're going to get tired and you're going to get weary and sometimes you're going to say, "I deserve more than this," and your day will come. That's God's plan.

Fourth, a leader is seen in the metaphor of a farmer, verse 6. "The farmer that works hard," this is the same word used of the elders in 1 Timothy 5:17, it means to labor to the point of exhaustion...to labor until you're weary, until you drop. "The farmer works till he drops and he must be the first partaker of the fruits."

You know what's going to happen? If a farmer worked his head off, producing crop for somebody else and didn't get anything, he'd quit being a farmer. Right? He'd say, "This is ridiculous. Every year I sell my crop for less money than I had to pay to get it in the ground. I can't cut it." The only thing that keeps a farmer working himself to exhaustion to feed the people is that he gets back something from it. And I'll tell you something, that's exactly what Paul is saying. Listen, unless you are first, the partaker of the fruits, you're not going to be any good in feeding somebody else. And that's why Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "Take heed first to yourself and then to the flock over which God has made you overseer." If you dry up in your own life, you're not going to be any use to anyone else. A leader then is somebody who is producing things through his own study and his own teaching and his own leading that are feeding his own soul. And then he ministers to others out of the overflow. But the firstfruits come to him.

And I'll tell you. Sometimes you get tired, a lot of times you get tired and you get weary, but what I'm getting as I look at my ministry of what I'm feeding on, what the Word of God is pouring into my life is so rewarding that it's worth all of that toil in order to share these truths with you because of what I gain. But the day that I didn't get anything for myself and I was just going through the motions for you would be the day I would give it up. That's what he's saying. A leader has got to be one who concentrates on feeding his own soul. And I'll tell you, that's my view of the ministry. I'll give you a little secret insight. When I study a passage, I do not ever study a passage to make a sermon,...never. You know what I do when I study that passage? I study it so that I will get what it's teaching. I'm very selfish. I just want to know...and I'll go on and on and my wife will say to me, "Why you keep studying that same passage. You've got more material than you could ever give in a sermon."

But that isn't the point. The point is, I want to know everything that's there. And when I'm fed and when I'm fat and when I am loaded with the good things that are there, it will spill out on you on Sunday. And then the next Sunday I'll finish it. (Laughter) It's out of the overflow of my own life. I'm the guy out there harvesting the firstfruits, you see? Leadership has to be that way. Any ministry of leadership you have has to be feeding your life or you're not going to do it for others, you're not going to be any good at it unless there's something there you're feeding.

So what do we learn here? The picture of the farmer tells us some things. There must be a willingness to work hard. Second, a need to nurture your own soul. And I'll bring up a third, patience for results. You know, the one guy who has to wait a long time to see the result of his work is a farmer. Do you know that? And you want to know another guy? A Christian leader. Boy, sometimes you can pour your life into somebody, give them the Word and teach them and you say, "Come on, guy, come on. Go, grow." You know, and it's flopping around, you know, "Come on." And you become a spiritual cheerleader. Fire this guy up, feed him the Word. And pretty soon you check him a couple of years later and he's bloomed. But you've got to be patient, like a farmer. You've got to patient. Crop will come in, just let it take its time.

Fifth, verse 15 he adds another metaphor for a Christian leader, a workman. Study, and that isn't the best translation, "Do your best" would be, "Do your best to be approved unto God a workman, not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." A workman...humph. You know, this is so good, I want you to get this now. Verse 14 he says, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit..." You know, lots of people like to talk. Not so many like to work. Right? Oh there's plenty of quibblers, plenty of verbal people...talk-talk...lots of talk. Verse 16, "Shun profane and vain babbling." He says in verse 14, "Don't talk so much." Verse 16, "Don't talk so much." Verse 15, "Do...what?...work." I hear people say, "Well, I don't understand it. He's so busy he never has time to talk with me." Well just maybe he's doing what he ought to do.

You know, I know some people who are supposed Christian leaders and all they do is talk. They go from conference to conference to conference to seminar to conference, meeting, lunch, breakfast, dinner, conversation. They just talk, their whole Christian life they talk. They go into their office, the phone, they talk some more on the phone. If no one calls, they just go find somebody to talk to. Believe me. He says, "Look, we have plenty of people talking, but you do your best to be approved, dokimos, one who stood the test, unto God a workman whose work gives him no cause for shame because he cut a straight line relative to the truth.

What does it mean "cut a straight line?" Well maybe Paul got that metaphor from his tent making. Here's a guy who wants to give out the Word straight down the line, he doesn't want to deviate to the right, or the left, he wants to cut a straight path for the Word. So he says, the only way you're ever going to cut a straight path rightly dividing the Word, the only way you're ever going to give people the Word is to quit talking and...what?...working and studying. The stress is on the diligence of the worker so that his God will approve of Him.

Listen, I appreciate the response of people to my messages and my ministry, as I know you do in your leadership. But there's one and one alone that I really want to approve and who's that? That's God. And somebody may say to me, "Ah, that was wonderful. That was wonderful, it blessed my heart." And I'll walk away and all I can think about is, "I wonder of God is so pleased." A workman, a leader is a workman who cuts a straight line.

So, what is that metaphor teaching us in summary? A workman is accountable to God for inspection and approval of his work. A workman is desirous of never having to be ashamed of anything he does. He's going to do it to his best. A workman is careful to handle God's Word without error or distortion. A workman is somebody committed to less talk and more study.

Sixth, one other metaphor of a leader is vessel...verse 20. "In a great house there are not only

skeuos," utensils, or vessels, jars, dishes, instruments, it could be anything, "Of gold and silver but of wood and earth, some to honor and some to dishonor." Now he's not talking about function here, they'll all do the same thing. They'll all hold your soup. That isn't the issue. It's just that some are honored and some are not. If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified and fit for the Master's use, prepared to every good work."

The great house here is symbolic to the church. And within the church there are honored vessels, silver and gold, and I think primarily that refers to true teachers. And there are wood and pottery vessels to dishonor, false teachers. And what he's saying is...Look, separate yourself from the false. He's distinguishing between true leaders and false leaders and the call is for separation. Verse 21, "Purge himself from these...what?...these...what?...these wood and earth vessels." Make sure you associate with those of proper spiritual character and true leadership. Have no fellowship with false leaders, false teachers, be a pure vessel.

Now what's he saying with that? He's saying a leader is a vessel. That means he will have to be sanctified, cleansed, set apart from all heresy and all heretics. That's a leader. Second, he is to be useful to a master. It's a beautiful thought. It says that if he is sanctified, in verse 21, and this is beautiful, easy to be used. You know a better word? Available...available. As a vessel you ought to be pure and available, and I love this, and prepared. Pure, available and ready. That's the kind of vessel he wants. Separated from the false, doesn't compromise, pure, available and ready.

Are you available? Are you ready? Pure? That's the standard for the vessel God wants to lead.

Last. Another metaphor, slave, verse 24. Seventh and last. The leader that God wants is a slave, "And the servant, or slave, doulos, bond slave of the Lord. That's the last term he uses to describe a leader. We're slaves of God. No indication here that we're slaves of the people but of the Lord. And as such, we are not called on to do our own will, but His will. The slave mentality. And what is it? Oh, this is beautiful. "He must not be quarrelsome; sweet, gentle spirit." "Gentle unto all men," and literally the word there for gentle is kind, kind to everybody. Habitually kind person, apt to teach, didaktikos, again, a sweet, gentle spirit. This is all talking about attitudes and imparting truth and patient. And the word literally means patient when he's been wronged.

What kind of leader is he? He's a slave and he's a slave of God, and he does God's will. And when he is opposed and when he is rebuked and when he is disagreed with and when people criticize him and when people don't agree with him, he is to be never quarreling, always gentle, teaching with a sweet spirit and forever patient. Verse 25, "In meekness, instructing those that oppose him." That's humility in the slave metaphor.

So what is Paul saying then? A slave leader, one, works willingly in full submission to the will of the heavenly master. Two, he has the right kind, humble, gentle spirit. I'm going to close with this. God wants leaders. Are you a candidate? Are you? Listen, are you willing to be a candidate?

You say, "John I don't know. I don't know if God wants me to lead a Sunday School class or a ladies Bible study or a home Bible study, or a woman's fellowship group or a woman's missionary group or a group of men or...I don't know. I don't know if God wants me as a pastor or a missionary or an evangelist, or a leader."

Listen, here's some questions you have to answer, summing up everything. Are you a diligent student of the biblical message and able to articulate its teaching? Are you loyal and faithful for that biblical message? Are you actively involved in the training and equipping of additional workers? Are you hearing the Lord's call and joining the battle? Are you willing to suffer the hardships involved? Are you separated from the world and its activities so you have a single mind? Are you totally concerned with gaining Christ's approval on your service? Are you strongly self-disciplined, willing and able to conform your life to God's standards without letting up? Are you desiring above all to win and motivated by future reward rather than present pleasure? Are you willing to work hard in exhaust and toil? Are you careful to nurture your own soul? Are you patient for results? Are you eager to be accountable to God for His approval and inspection of your work? Are you desiring to never be ashamed of anything you do? Are you careful to handle God's Word without error or distortion? Are you committed to talk little and study much? Are you sanctified from evil and evil men, available, ready, aware of heresy and heretics? Are you willing to submit your will to the master? Do you possess the right spirit no matter what happens?

If that's you, or that's your desire, you're leadership material. You say, "God's standards are very high." You're right. He's God and He always puts them up there. But there's a goal. Paul even said, "Not as though I have already...what?...attained, I just know where the goal is and I'm giving it all I've got."

If this is your desire, before you put your head on the pillow and go to sleep tonight, tell God it's your desire and ask the Spirit to begin to work it into a reality. You say, "Should I really want that?" If any man desires that, he desires a good thing. God needs you.

Father, thank You for helping us tonight again just to focus on leadership. Thank You so much for the ones You've given us. We feel that we're so full tonight, the precious testimonies of our men, the songs they sung, the thrilling word about our ministry going into Russia and all of the things we've shared tonight, so fulfilling, so rich, understanding better what an elder is. And now being challenged with the possibility and reality of leading for You and with You. Help us to realize that in all of this, Father, the thing that it really comes back to is that You want to rule Your own church and You just want people who will submit to You. Raise up those people, Father, and for every one in this congregation who is already a leader, who is already in that position, challenge them with the responsibility afresh, challenge my heart. For those, Father, that You've called to follow, that You've called to be the support and the work and the strength and the ones who actually carry out the activity, the ones with the feet and the arms and the hands and the mouth and the ones who really do the ministry, God, challenge them to expect the highest things of their leaders and to pray for them faithfully and diligently till Jesus comes that the body might be built up for His glory. Amen.

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