

The Royal Task-Part 6
Coached by the Right Leaders
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, we have recently announced our Focal Point preaching cruise to Alaska on social media. I don't know if you saw that or not. Which is a great way to combine concentrated Bible study over a number of days with chilling out and relaxing on vacation. That is unless you're preaching. I got to tell you these preaching events, I've done a couple of them before and, yeah, there's no time for me to relax or chill out. No time for me to think about anything basically but preaching, which is, you know, it takes a lot of prep and preaching. So that's what I think about on these cruises. Except for the fact that I am happy to announce that last year, about a year ago last month, I went on a cruise to Alaska and I didn't preach a single time. I just chilled and relaxed and I got to think about things I've never thought about when I'm on those big ships out there sitting on my deck in the nighttime looking out not seeing any land, just seeing blackness for as far as I can see. Wondering what are we doing way out here and do we know where we're going and what if we hit an iceberg and do we know how to park this thing. There are lots of things that run through my mind. I'm not generally a worrier but these are kind of a big deal. And when you've got things like that that really matter. Like can we get to where we're headed? Do we, you know, are we going to hit anything in the ocean. Are we're going to sink? I mean, those things that I think are important as I'm on this gigantic ship. I know that good leadership is essential. Right?

When things really matter you're going to want good leadership. As we get to the last six verses of Acts Chapter 1 and the Church is about to set sail, if you will, on the most important mission that you could possibly imagine, the launching of God's Church. Right? What you see here is an interest in leadership. The importance of good leadership. See, because the gospel is important. The Church of Jesus Christ is important. I mean, you want to look at something that's important, the launch of something that's going to start an organizational movement that is going to reverberate on to this day that we're a part of now 2,000 years later. I mean, Acts Chapter 1 is setting us up for something so critically important, to be witnesses of Christ, to see the Church built and so before we get out of the first chapter they're saying we've got to have the right leaders in place. You want a full roster of leaders. You want the right leaders there. You're about to take this thing from 120 people in an upper room to over 3,000. Now they didn't know how big it was going to be but they knew it was supposed to be big. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. All of this was about to unfold and they said we've got to have the right leaders in place.

Now we started this discussion as you looked at Peter standing up in verse 15 and he's addressing the people and we looked at him talking about Judas and they looked at Scripture and they were praying together, we took an emphasis last week looking at that. But if you can pick it up in the middle of this discussion in verse 21. I'm going to look at verses 21 through 26 and notice the emphasis on leadership. If you got something important, when things are essential and important and critical, you better have good leadership in place. That's what we see here as Peter says in verse 21, follow along as I read it for you from the English Standard Version, it says, "So one of the men who has accompanied us," Peter says, "during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, from the beginning of the Baptism of John," that was the start of his public ministry, "until the day when he was taken up from us," the Ascension that had just happened, "one of these men must become a witness with us to his resurrection." That was the essential and most phenomenal feature of his ministry. He was raised from the dead. Of course it was more than that. He had a witness to the entire ministry of Christ, the teaching of Christ. They were supposed to teach people to obey ALL that Christ commanded. So we need someone whose been there the whole time.

And so they put two forward. Joseph, called Barsabbas, also called Justus, and Matthias. Verse 24, "And they prayed and they said, "You, Lord, you know the hearts of all, show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry an apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place. And they cast lots," as strange as that seems to sound. We'll look at that. "They cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." This entire passage shows us the concern that God has about leadership, that the Apostles rightly had in a common-sense way, they say, "We need leaders." It was important because Jesus kept talking about the twelve, talked about the 12 ruling over the 12 tribes of Israel. He called them The Twelve. We got Judas gone, here he's bailed. He's deserted. We need a replacement.

And actually we start in chapter two and we continue on through the book of Acts. We see God continuing to emphasize putting the right leaders in the right places of leadership in this fledgling thing called the Church that was going to get really big really fast. If it's important you better have good leadership. I want a captain on the bridge who knows what he's doing. I want an executive team that is competent in what they do. I want a whole crew on that ship. If we're going to steer the ship in the right place and get it where it's supposed to go, man, I want everyone to be competent and skilled. And so it was in the early church.

Now as you can see, I hope you pulled out the worksheet here and you've looked at it or downloaded it digitally. It's always available by 5:00 on Friday afternoons to get a preview what's coming up in the sermon, discussion questions and all, that's all there for you. If you're looking at that you'll see on the first point here, got a very short point but you also have the verses next to it, it is the entire passage, verses 21 through 26. Now all I want to do in this first point is just step back and say, wow, they're concerned about leaders. They're concerned about leadership. God, not only here but elsewhere, is concerned throughout the whole New Testament with leadership. If I were preaching in another time, in another century, in another place, in another culture, I may not even need to make a point out of this. But as a preacher in the 21st century in Western culture, certainly in America, certainly in Southern California, I've got to emphasize what's clearly here in this passage. That is the importance of good leadership. That God gives leaders and leaders are to be utilized, they're to be valued, they're to be respected. You are to have spiritual leaders in your life.

That's important. And we need to start that way. And if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, jot this down, number one, very simple point, you need to "Value Leadership." You need to value the fact that God has set up his Church to have leaders in it and you ought to care about that. You ought to value that. You ought to utilize that. You ought to live as though that's important to God because it is. So keep your finger here and I've already warned you, just looking at the theme, I want to go elsewhere in Scripture just to show how important this is to God and, therefore, may be more important to you today as you leave this campus than when you came on. So turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 4 and I want to show you a way that God analogizes this for us through the pen of the Apostle Paul to remind us how you ought to view leaders in your life. More specifically leaders in your church.

Everyone should have a church. And every time someone talks to me about their Christianity, if I start sharing the Gospel and they say, "Hey, you know what, I'm a Christian. Yeah, I've been a Christian now for however many years." I'll always ask them, "Well, what church are you a part of?" That's a good way to put it, by the way, not what church do you go to, but what church are you a part of? And when they give me a church, and sometimes I don't even get to that question, I go right over that to the next one, which is, "Who is your pastor?" Because everyone should have a pastor. Everyone should have a set of pastors, if your church is large enough, and they care for you because of what this passage says. That is that God has given these leaders to the church. And if you're part of the church then he's given them to you.

Look at how this is put, drop down to verse 7. Ephesians Chapter 4 verse 7. "But grace was given," God's favor, his goodness, "was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." Now he talked a lot about spiritual gifts in First Corinthians Chapter 12. And we know that God is doling out and dispensing his grace, his goodness, his mercy, his spirit, as it says in First Corinthians 12:4, in varieties of ways, in various measures, all for the common good. So not everyone is gifted in the same way but that grace has been dispensed and he's given this to the church, this grace, and therefore it says, now he quotes an Old Testament text here, "When he ascended on high," which is the text that we've been dealing with in Acts Chapter 1, "he ascended on high, he led a host of captives." So he was the conquering King, sat down on the right hand of the Father and then it adds this line which he's going to pick up on here and elaborate on, "and he gave gifts to men."

So parenthetically verses 9 and 10 you see him start to talk about the Ascension and about the Incarnation, he came to earth and all of that. That's very interesting for a whole another time. And that, you know, parenthetical section here. It's worth preaching but he continues the idea of giving gifts to men in verse 11 and he picks up on verse 11 and says, "Hey, let's talk about the gifts." Verse 11, "And he gave the apostles," that's a group, that's a class of people, "and the

prophets and the evangelists and the shepherds and teachers." Syntactically, as we say, the way this is laid out in grammar, it's clear this is four categories here. Apostles. Prophets. Evangelists. Pastor-teachers.

So let's think that through. Apostles, that's what we're dealing with in Acts Chapter 1. They were down one apostle so they were going to put another apostle in place and the Apostles, as it says in Second Corinthians 12:12, they had a particular authenticating authority that allowed them to do things like break natural law. They didn't do it all the time but they showed that they were God's representatives, Christ's emissaries, by being able to do things like, well, heal the sick, open blind eyes, take the people who were paralytic and make them rise, stand up, take up your mat and walk. Those were amazing things. And there were prophets, as these apostles went out saying God's doing something here through the Messiah, Christ is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Old Testament. And now we need to teach you about that, so we need a mouthpiece from God like we had in the Old Testament to teach you God's truth from heaven, so now we have prophets.

So the apostles going and starting the movement and now we have these prophets coming in and teaching New Testament truths without a New Testament. We don't have a New Testament written yet. And so they're the mouthpiece of God. They're instructing and they're edifying and they're directing and they're giving people the admonishment from God about New Testament life and New Testament truth and new covenant realities. So we have the apostles who found it that represent Christ and his authority and the prophets that sustain it. The Bible says in Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 20 that that's the foundation of the Church. The foundation of the Church is the apostles and prophets and the chief cornerstone is Christ himself. The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets.

And then we've got two more categories here. The evangelist and the pastor-teachers, which is just like the apostles and the prophets in that they're doing the same kind of thing. The apostles went out and established this movement in various places in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. Well, we do that now. We send people out to established churches. The traditional word for that I suppose in our parlance is missionaries. We call around here church planters. That's what we believe in, going out and planting churches. They're evangelists. That's the word for it in the Bible, not someone who fills a stadium and has a concert and shares the gospel in a stadium. I mean we call them evangelists but the idea of a biblical office of evangelism is someone who is planting churches, a missionary.

Well then we need to sustain that work. Just like Paul would come into Ephesus for three years, he would establish the church, well then he hands off the leadership of the church to Timothy. Timothy now is considered the pastor-teacher of that place and he is leading them and serving them. I say pastor but the word here is translated, the word "poimen" in Greek, is translated here, "shepherd." Shepherd and pastor are the same things. That's the same concept, different English words but for the same idea. And that takes us back to the Old Testament agrarian society of a guy with a staff who's leading these sheep and his job is to protect them from the wolves, protect them from the bears, protect them from the lions, and to feed them, lead them into pastures and make sure they drink from the still waters and that they get their stomachs filled and they're cared for and the shepherd cares for the sheep. And the primary means of doing that is teaching them.

And so we have the establishment of the Church, the apostles, the teaching of the early church, the prophets. Then we get the Bible written because the prophets now have written their New Testament truths and we have with the Bible in hand the evangelists who go out or the church planters or missionaries. And then we have the pastor-teachers who come in and sustain it. They teach New Testament truths with a New Testament in their hands.

Those are all, look back at our passage in verse 8, those are gifts that God gives to the Church. If you're in a place where a church has been planted, maybe on a mission field somewhere we would call it, that is a gift to you in the church planning team comes into town and they establish the church.

You come to this church and the Bible says that the pastors of this church who teach you are God's gifts to you. "Well, Pastor, do you think they're God's gift to me?" (audience laughs) Yes, I do. (audience claps) Now only 12 of you clapped at that (audience laughs). Some of you want a

gift receipt it sounds like. Can we re-gift him? And I understand all the pastors are imperfect. God has a way of picking pastors who clearly we know are not perfect. But they're given a role in your life to lead you in a western American autonomous freedom culture that thinks, "I got a Bible, I got God, I got the Spirit, I don't need leaders." Well the Bible says you do need leaders and they're a gift to you. Not just the leaders you need when we don't have a New Testament and you need apostles and prophets, but when you have a New Testament, you need church planters and you need pastors. And they are gifts that God gives to you.

For what purpose? Verse 12, "to equip the saints," to prepare you, to get you ready, "for the work of ministry." God has called you to do something, not just sit there and learn from the Bible, but to do something. But to do something to equip you is to make the body what it should be, the body of Christ strong for the building up of the body of Christ "until we all attain," everyone, "to the unity of faith," we're all believing the same thing, "to the knowledge of the Son of God," we have a good relationship and a knowledgeable, sincere relationship with the Son of God, "to a mature manhood," we're grown up, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." If you think that's a high bar, you're right. All I would say, is there a gap between where you're at and where that statement makes you think? Well, there is. Right? And the point is God gives you a gift to try and get you there, to move you there.

"So that," look at verse 14, "we may no longer be children," we don't want to be immature, we don't want to be, "tossed to and fro by waves," this an analogy, of course, like a storm, "carried around by every wind," and now we get it clear, "of doctrine," of teaching. And a lot of that teaching is, "by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." So here is Paul saying, listen, there's a lot of bad teaching out there, there are a lot of things that can waste your time. Matter of fact, I could give you a lot of books that are being published by "Christian publishers" that could take you down a road where you could waste two or three years of your Christian life chasing nonsense. But your pastors are to be a gift to you, the leaders of the church are supposed to be a gift in your life from Christ, and one of their primary jobs is to teach you so that you can become increasingly mature, so that you don't chase around everything that just has a Jesus t-shirt on it, so that you're discerning, that you learn to be established and rooted and grounded in the truth, so that you understand that those leaders are directing your Christian life, not so that you can be negative on everybody else who doesn't go to our church, but so that you can know what sound doctrine is, what good biblical teaching is, so that you're not vulnerable to any best-selling Christian book that says, well here's the way do it, that you're biblically instructed.

Could you do that on your own? Well, I guess we could all go to our corners and do this on our own. But the great thing about biblical leadership is that God says why don't we get people who I will gift and I will then allow them through the giving of the church to segregate their time to give full attention to this. And if you don't think I remind the staff of this, we meet on Wednesdays together, big staff meeting with, you know, all of our key full-time leaders and often I'll say, you know our church family right now, they're in front of computer screens and spreadsheets or they're practicing medicine or law or they're doing whatever they're doing in the high rises in Irvine and you and I have the privilege right now full-time serving God to make the church what it should be, to direct them in programming and structures and literature and podcasts and teaching that allows us to help direct them with the time that we're allowed because we are leaders in the church.

That is a privilege, a responsibility, it's a trust that you give us and it's one that the Bible says you ought to recognize and value as a gift. Now if I were going to turn to them and talk to them, and certainly I have and you can ask them, a lot of instruction we give about what the Bible demands of leaders. That would be great if I were at a pastor's conference, but I'm sitting here on a Sunday morning in my own church talking to congregants. And so I thought if I'm going to think about this congregational responsibility to valuing leaders, let me at least give you some biblical principles from outside of Acts Chapter 1 that may help you know how to make that work.

How does that live itself out? How do I apply that? If you're going to value leaders what does that look like? I mean you have five things. Ok? Real quickly, five things from a congregant's perspective as to how to value the leadership that God has placed in your life. Number one, let me turn you to this passage, Hebrews Chapter 13. Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 17. I'm going to go right for this verse but I'll word it with a little bit of sugar sprinkled on the top. I'll put a little syrup on it for you. Put it in a waffle cone. Add some Reese's Pieces on the top. I'll word it very carefully.

Let me read the text of Scripture for you, verse 17. "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they're keeping watch over your souls." It's what Paul said to the Ephesian pastors as left them in Acts 20, he said you got a job to do as shepherds. The wolves are going to come in and they're even going to rise up from our own flock and they're going to lead people astray. You've got to guard them, protect them. "Keep them, watch over your souls as those who will give an account," and we will.

That's not just do you know everybody's name in your church. That's in your pulpit ministry, in your writing ministry, in your teaching ministry, in your counseling, do you direct them away from the problems? Do you watch out for their spiritual health? Do you help them think soundly about God and Christ and the Holy Spirit? And we'll be held accountable for that. Of course all the caring stuff too but we place that as the primary central thing when in reality it's about directing you down the path of biblical orthodoxy, of good sound doctrine.

"Let them do this with joy and not with groaning." So there's the responsibility on you. No, the two words at the beginning of the verse are "obey" and "submit." Now, I would never word the point that way, because I'm so nice. Right? But if I'm going to say how do you let them do this with joy and not with groaning, I'll just word it this way. If you're taking notes here's Mike Fabarez's way to word this. I just want to say this: "Respond to the Leadership." Be responsive to their lead. Do things that show that you're open to being led. That's the point. If you put yourself in a congregation and the leaders lead, I want you to be responsive to their leadership. Don't sit here like it's a take it or leave it kind of attitude. Do you check the Scripture to see if what's said is so? Absolutely. I want you to be a good Berean. But as the pastors say, "Hey, we want you to do this. We'd like you to be involved in this sub-congregational thing if you're part of this demographic in our church. We'd like you to serve in this particular area or get involved in these things." I would like you to take notes. We'd like you to open your Bibles and look at a passage, to be responsive to that leadership, to be open to being led by the leaders. Right? Guess what? That makes leaders feel like, "Hey, we're doing something right." To lead and actually have people follow that lead, that's what makes our job a joy.

Now you can make our job a burden and then the kind of underhanded kind of veiled threat there is coming from God, "that would be no advantage to you." No, I'm not sure how God's going to deal with you if you become a burden, make our job a groaning task. But to have a responsive kind of congregation that responds well to the leadership of our pastoral team, of our ministry leaders in our church, makes us get together and do our job with a great deal of joy. I can say you're doing pretty well at that. Our staff members, we go to conferences or we deal with other churches, we just realize how good we have it at a church that has been responsive to the leadership. But I just say, as Paul said to the Thessalonians, you've been doing a good job, let's just excel still more. Keep going.

Next verse, number two. Letter "B." Three words in English. "Pray For Us." I'd like you to value your leadership by praying for them. You ought to be praying for your leaders in your church all the time. You ought to articulate on a prayer list that you have on your phone, a to-do list, ToDoList, PrayerMate, however you do it, where you are praying by name for your leaders. It would be good if you put a few of their family members' names down as well. Pray for them. Do you want to value your leaders? Well, be responsive to their leadership. If you want to use those really harsh words of Scripture, "obey and submit" to them and then, secondly, pray for them. Super important.

Here's another one if you're fast in your Bible you want to turn there. First Corinthians Chapter 16. First Corinthians 16, at least jot it down, verses 10 and 11. A very interesting passage. Timothy is going to become the pastor, the senior preaching pastor at Ephesus. One who's worthy of double honor Paul said. That's the idea. And before he's there he's becoming a messenger and an understudy, a protege, a disciple of Paul and he sends him to Corinth. When Paul sends him to Corinth with this letter, here's what he tells the Corinthians about Timothy. First Corinthians 16:10. "When Timothy comes, see to it that you," here it is, "put him at ease among you." It's another, like, make his job a joy. "Put him at ease among you." Why?" For he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am." Now here comes a command, kind of a third person imperative, where you're concerned about how other people treat Timothy, and "let no one despise him."

I put it this way. Letter "C." "Protect Your Leaders." Protect them. You don't think it's vulnerable to stand up and to teach or to get into a counseling session when people are having trials and to give biblical counsel. How vulnerable is that? We're on the record. I talked during announcements about these podcasts. Everything we say from the platform is recorded. I mean, your pastors are going to be open to a lot of criticism, a lot of people despising them for what they say, a lot of people disagreeing who think, "Well, they've got it out for us. Right? They don't love us." Would you understand this? I can speak, not just for myself, but for our leadership team, they love you. They make decisions and sometimes they're hard decisions based on Scripture because they care for you. Please don't let people despise them. Right? You may even go to lunch today and someone's tempted to have barbecued pastor for lunch and even talking about this sermon. "Can you believe Pastor Mike, this self-serving, self-aggrandizing sermon, talking about 'love me, love me, respect me, obey me. What?'" (audience laughing).

Can I tell you? I didn't want to preach this passage. I'd like to skip it but I figured you'd notice if I skipped it. So, I can't help but bring to you principles about good biblical leadership hoping that we are doing our best at it. But I want you to take this job seriously of not despising the people who are doing the work of the Lord among you. Protect them. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Understand their good-heartedness even when what they tell you is maybe not what you want to hear or what the person complaining with you across the table didn't want to hear. Please! You shouldn't even accept an accusation of any kind, even a serious one, against a leader of the church unless there are two or three witnesses. That's the way Paul says to protect them. Don't let people despise them.

Galatians 6:6. As long as I'm going to be barbecued for lunch by some people I might as well throw this one in. Galatians 6 says, "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches." Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. You may say, well that is a passing the hat and professional ministry and Paul had dealt with that with the Corinthians. Right? "Is it too much for those who sow among you spiritual things to reap from you material things?" In other words, the paid ministry is a biblical concept, though some say it's not. Of course it is and I can establish that in many passages in the Scripture. "Don't muzzle the ox while he's threshing" is a passage that's dealing with it, according to Paul, of paying your pastors. But beyond that, I mean this principle is embedded there, but beyond that it is to share good things with those who teach you.

And I'm not just talking about me. Please. I don't want any more Abba Zabba's (audience laughter). OK? I'm not talking about you giving me candy. I really have had enough Abba Zabba's. Now if you bought me some Spree I could probably do all right with that. No, I'm just kidding. I don't need candy. I literally gained five pounds. I don't need candy. But can you look at everyone across the board who leads in this church and can you say, "How can I be generous to them? What can I do beyond putting something in the offering that would just be kind to them that would show that I care for them?" If you got something nice can you share it with them? When their birthday rolls around can you do something really nice for them, even just a note of encouragement is certainly an act of your generosity? Care for your leaders. Care for the people in your lives who are teaching, your sub-congregation, even down to the small group leader who guides a discussion of the sermon every week in your small group. Be generous to them. "Let him who was taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."

Lastly, let me just summarize it this way. This one might be worth looking at with your own eyeballs, First Thessalonians Chapter 5 verses 12 and 13. First Thessalonians 5:12 and 13. I've got to respond to their leadership, pray for them, protect them, be generous to them. Here's one that kind of wraps it all up. First Thessalonians 5:12. "We ask you brothers," Paul says to the Thessalonians, "to respect those who labor among you who are over you in the Lord and admonish you," which, by the way, stings. Right? People talk about in the baptismal tank last week, "I came to the church and, man, I didn't like the sermons and it hurt and it stung and I left feeling bad." A pastor is not doing his job unless he holds the mirror up to you and shows you where it is in your life you need some changes. Right? That's the whole point. You got in front of a mirror this morning and it gave you data about your life that needed to be attended to. Right? I hope. Some of us needed more work than others but we had to get some things adjusted because we looked in the mirror and we saw the truth. And the Bible does that, they admonish you. But even so, look at verse 13, even the ones that sting you with the truth of God's Word, "esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

I just put it this way. Just love and appreciate them. Love and respect them. Love your leaders. And I'll tell you what, that makes their job a joy. It makes for a better church. It makes for YOU having a better experience with the gifts that God gives you. Treat the gifts that God gives you in leadership, the leaders in your life, treat them well, respond to their leadership, pray for them, protect them, be generous in love and respect them. And it would be an advantage to you if you did those things.

Verses 21 and 22. Back to our passage in Acts Chapter 1. I just want to note one thing about what the common-sense requirement was for the 12th apostle that they were going to pick. "One of the men who has accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us -- one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." We need someone who was there at the beginning, starting at his public ministry with a baptism of John, John the Baptist, all the way to his Ascension. Didn't miss a class. Was there with Christ. Got all the training that Christ gave. Why? Because at the end when he took them up to a mountain he said this in Matthew 28. He said after you make disciples and baptize them, he said this: "Teaching them to observe ALL that I have commanded you."

Can you imagine the shiver that should go up your spine? You've just been commissioned to teach EVERYTHING that Christ said. You know what? If I got a guy who is supposed to teach everything that Christ said I want someone who was there for all the classes and didn't get sick very often and have to miss. He got all that Christ commanded. He got comprehensive training. Here's the thing about leaders. Number two on your outline, "You Ought to Require Training." You ought to have in your life a high level of demand that you just intuitively expect of your leaders being trained. And guess what? In our day that ain't all that popular. And I know this and I can prove it to you very simply.

Picture a city that you might want to move to one day. Go on the Internet, look for a good church in the area of some place you'd say, "Well, this would be a great place to live." And say I want to find a good Bible-teaching church where I can have some shepherds and teachers guiding my life and go and say, "Well, I want to find out who those leaders are," because that is critically important. Number one, we like to hide the staff page now on churches because, I don't know, we don't want to self-promote these leaders and it's not about leaders. I understand it's not about leaders. I understand leaders are just servants of Christ and in the big scheme there nothing and God can use a donkey to preach to you if he wanted to. Right? But if I'm going to look for a church I want to know who the leaders are. So let's not hide that button 18 levels down in the Web site menus.

And number two, when I get to the page and finally find the photos of all the leaders who are spiritually supposed to guide my life as I find this church and submit to their leadership, I don't want to know what their spirit animal is, I don't want to know what their favorite yogurt flavor is, I don't want to know what their favorite rock band is. I don't care about any of that. That's interesting and cute but that is the trend today, you know that. People don't want to talk about where they'd go to school, what they learned, what degrees that they have. Because that's like, "Yeah, I know what kind of church that is." No, no, no, I'm not going to go to a church where I don't figure out if these guys who are supposed to be leading me have some training. Training is important. "Are you saying you have to have formal training?" Formal training is pretty good. We believe in formal training so much so that we're launching the Compass Bible Institute because we think formal training is important.

Because you know what happens in formal training? Guys like me who might start to think because they've read the Bible a few times, we know some things, we end up writing papers, putting ourselves out vulnerably making statements and assertions, and we hand it in to people who are smarter than us and know more than us, and they take out their red pen and they tear it apart and hand it back and humble us. You know what's so good? Before we start writing books and pamphlets and articles for the church to consume, we've got some people who have been down the road who've studied more than us, who have more maturity than us, who know the Bible better than us, who can mark up our work and say, you need correction. That's the process. I mean, that's why we go to school. That's why we get formal training.

Now, can you get that some other way? Oh yeah, you can and the church at one time use to develop that within itself but no one really should be followed, no one should be submitted to and obeyed in terms of your spiritual life unless they've had training. They have to have formal training through some accredited institution and sitting there in a classroom? I didn't say that. Right? But the exceptions that you're going to point to, "Well, that guy was a great leader for the Lord and he didn't have formal training." Can you find those? Yes, they're the exception and the exception, by the way, proves the rule. They're exceptions and they're exceptional people, by the way, who sit there and voraciously devour theological tomes. Guess what? That's not what I wanted to read when I was 20 years old. And yet I was forced to. Why? Because I had formal training.

Now if you can do that on your own that's great. But I would also say find some people who know more than you and vulnerably put out your writings, put your assertions on paper, your conclusions on paper, and let some people who know more than you critique all that. I'm just saying training is important. I know we read through Acts Chapter 9 we see Paul converted to Christ. And if you're reading quickly through the passage, then you think well then he went out and he started becoming this great apostle. There's a little statement in the middle of Acts Chapter 9. Paul you might remember was Saul at the time heading to Damascus to persecute Christians, he gets knocked off his horse. And remember, we talked about Ananias? Not Ananias and Sapphira, but Ananias of Damascus. He takes them into his home and he prays and the scales come off his eyes. Well, there's a little phrase when Luke is recording the historical narrative and the chronology of that, he says this before he gets let down in a basket out of the window in the walls of Damascus, it says, "and after many days." And you want to raise your hand and say what happened during those many days? Well, he doesn't tell us. But if you read through Galatians Chapter 1 you start to see gaps of time that Paul talks about in his own autobiography and you think, "When did you do that?" Well, he did it during the "many days" in Acts Chapter 9. Well, what did he do? Well it says he didn't go immediately to Jerusalem. Matter of fact, he went out into the Arabian desert for three years. He was in the proximity of Damascus and he says, the Lord delivered things to me, the Lord trained me.

Even Paul went to seminary you understand. Oh, he sat at the feet of Gamaliel who's a great scholar even as a non-Christian, as a Jewish person opposing Christianity and he took all of that information and knowledge into his Christian life but then he had to sit at the feet of Christ. How did that work? I'm not sure. We don't get a lot of information. Matter of fact, if you look carefully at the chronology of Paul, I mean, there are about seven or eight years you've got to figure out what happened here? Now we can assume he went to Cilicia and some other places where he talks about in the Corinthian church and he refers to things that we don't know when that happened. It probably happened during that period of time, those lost seven years or so of Paul's life.

But I know three years he said he talked about being in Arabia. Not southern Arabia in the Sinai Peninsula, if you know geography, you got a desert that creeps on up the Arabian Desert and divides the fertile valley between the Tigris and Euphrates, the Mesopotamian area, to the coastal region that is Israel and the Mediterranean coast. But in between you got the desert that creeps up and right at the edge and Syria is the capital of Damascus and on Damascus, we read about in our Daily Bible Reading this morning in Isaiah's prophecies, you might remember, you've got the Arabian desert. So Paul was there probably going back and forth between his early Christian life in Damascus and spending time getting trained in the desert of Arabia. Even Paul needed training even after he had a great non-Christian education.

Require training of your leaders. It's so important. It's why we're launching Compass Bible Institute. It can be a lot of red ink, that's the point, to sharpen our skills and to see people get educated. Please, if you have not checked out Compass Bible Institute, please learn about it. We are praying for God's hand of provision and grace upon this institution to raise up people who can be having an accurate and a good handling of God's Word. Who know church history, who know theology, know the languages, that's so important to us.

Value leadership, require training, they certainly required training of whoever is going to lead in the Church, and then "they put forward two," verse 23, look at it, Acts Chapter 1, Joseph called Barsabbas, who is also called Justus." He's going to win this vote by names. He's got a lot of them. So there's the forerunner. But then creeps in Matthias. So they got two guys who they meet all the

requirements. They prayed about it, remember, they have quoted Scripture about it. So they've searched Scripture, they've prayed, they have now put two candidates forward, and they said, "Lord, we're depending on you to give us wisdom here. You know the hearts of all," verse 24, "show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place," which we talked about last week as gross and gruesome as that was. "And they cast lots." Is that how you choose pastors at Compass Bible Church? Do you cast lots? "And the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." What's with the casting of lots? Well that's a good question.

In the Old Testament there was a sanctioning of making decisions after all other things were consulted. And you should consult as they did. You should consult God in prayer, you ought to consult God in group prayer, you should consult God in Scripture, you should consult God even in common sense requirements, which are there in verses 21 and 22. But then God says there's something that we know of as lots, that's a category of kind of drawing straws, rolling dice, rock-paper-scissors. I mean there's this sense of this kind of this objective kind of way to determine things. The ultimate example of that was sanctioned in the high priestly ephod. There was the tank top, if you will, of the priest and then over that he had this breastplate and he had the 12 jewels representing the Twelve Tribes of Israel and then under that he had a pocket in there where he had two stones called the Urim and the Thummim. You remember hearing about that?

And those two stones were a form of casting lots that there are a lot of theories about. I can tell you definitively Joseph Smith is wrong. So it's not, if you know anything about Mormon history, it's not some fancy glasses in upstate New York that help you read golden plates. I'm sorry. I don't mean to mean that but I am saying if you're a Mormon you've got to reexamine the unbiblical interpretation of Joseph Smith. Matter of fact, Joseph Smith was looking for things just like that that weren't defined in Scripture so that he can provide through, you know, a claim of authority to say, "Well, I'm going to tell you what it is." If you look at the best historians, Jewish historians, to figure out what the Urim and Thummim is, we don't know. Urim starts with, in Hebrew, the Hebrew letter Aleph, which is silent, and that's the first letter the Hebrew alphabet and the Thummim starts with the Tav, which is the last letter. So does that mean anything, kind of a-to-z? I don't know.

Urim. What does that mean? Any time you have an 'im" on a transliterated word in Hebrew that's a plural that has its etymological root in the word "light." "Thummim" has the etymological root in "perfections," so lights and perfection. Well what is it? Some people say well maybe it was a dark stone and a light stone, you put it in the pouch, someone asks you a question. Saul comes and says to the high priest, "Should we go to war against the Philistines. The high priest would reach into his pocket and pull out a stone and if it's black it would be "no" if it's white it would be "yes." But that's not quite right because even Saul, when he did go consult the priest, the Bible says that he claimed the Lord did not answer him in the Urim and the Thummim, so there's something more to it than that. This is not an easy topic and the Bible doesn't give us a lot of information. Even the Jewish rabbis don't know exactly what this was about. Some have theories.

But there was a kind of determining God's will on things that was more than just, within the Jewish community, though it was sanctioned on the day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, they would choose the goat, which goat would become the scapegoat and symbolically take the sins of Israel out in the wilderness, it was chosen by lots. There was the allotment of the land of the Israelites in the Promised Land after the conquest with Joshua, which by the way, is where we get the word "lot" from. Your lot is a place that was chosen by God and the means by which was the lot, the casting of lots. Anyone could do this and non-Christians did it. Matter of fact, the Roman soldiers in the New Testament cast lots to determine who would get the garment of Christ as he hung on the cross. They said, "Well, we want someone to get that. We don't want to tear it up." So they cast lots to figure that out.

It's also sanctioned within Jewish history in Luke Chapter 1 we met Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and when he learned he was going to have John the Baptist, his lot was cast and he was chosen to go burn incense, which the country priests were brought in to do that and they had a chance to do that once a year. And someone was chosen from that priestly clan to go in and offer incense and that lot was cast. There are lots all throughout the Bible and the Bible says in the book of Proverbs you can cast the lot into the lap but the decision is from the Lord. What is that about? Well, we do believe, obviously, that God is involved in every molecule in the universe.

But I am telling you this. We are not choosing leaders based on drawing straws or casting lots. But something that's involved in lots before, and I would say there is something about Acts Chapter 2, the differing relationship with the Spirit, though it's not radically different. I understand the Spirit was involved in Old Testament decisions and you could derive wisdom from the Holy Spirit and the Spirit was with people. There was something different in Acts Chapter 2 and then the work of the prophets certainly completed New Testament revelation and it was codified in writing, you can look in Scripture and the Bible says he's given us all things for life and God says that.

I don't think I'm going to recommend to you to cast any lots. But I can say at the end of this list of Scripture and prayer and consultation and common sense there was the circumstances of lots. And I can't tell you that circumstances don't play a role in the decision making even of picking pastors because there is a role in which circumstances play. So in principle, at least, I understand that.

Now the practice of it, sanctioned in the Old Testament, and it was a God-given sanctioned way to determine things when everything else had been consulted. But I am going to say there's something distinct now. If we want to make important decisions I don't think casting lots is the right way to go about it. But I am going to say that the decision making involves all the things we've seen in the context of this passage. So I guess if we had two completely qualified pastors and we've gone through all the process and we'd all prayed and we'd all consulted Scripture and then we sit there in that group and have to make a decision, sometimes we'll use circumstances as the final straw, if you will, pardon the pun, to make that decision.

There's a lot more that could be said on that. Let me just leave you with that to say that when it all comes down to it use every available means to make sure you're choosing the right leaders. A lot of that is directed to the leaders because the leaders are the ones who are appointing leaders we see in Scripture. And so I just want to tell you that you need to, number three, "Choose Your Leaders Wisely." And some leaders are chosen for you, I understand that. But every Christian has to choose their leaders because in a free country, you get to go choose your church. So maybe even you're listening to this on the radio and you are deciding what church to go to. I'm just saying choose your leaders wisely. You're putting yourself under the leadership. They are over you in the Lord and they're called to admonish you. Choose them carefully. It doesn't matter what their favorite color is. What matters is are they people who are devoting themselves, as it says in Acts 6, to the Word of God and to prayer.

Are they willing to set aside other priorities? Are they willing, like it says in Second Timothy Chapter 2, like soldiers to not get entangled in civilian affairs? That they are single-minded, hardworking people who are there to serve you by delivering to you accurately and unabashedly and unashamed the truth of God even when it hurts and stings. Choose your leaders wisely. Be careful about that.

Some people say well was Matthias the 12th apostle? That's a great question. There were several in the Bible who were called apostles. And I've said to you already and thinking that through in the book of Acts, there were some like Barnabas who were labeled an apostle, but I would say there's a sense in which there's a technical usage of that word and a non-technical usage. Matter of fact, sometimes the translators know when they see the word "apostolos" in Greek in the New Testament, they translate it "messenger" because clearly the context means it was a messenger of a particular group of people. And so it was that you had messengers and the word "apostolos" was used, the transliterated word "apostle," and we're not talking about one of the Twelve.

Well some say, "Well, I think the Apostle Paul was the 12th apostle. And I've already talked about that a little bit in this series saying, well, you know, he becomes a prominent apostle in First Corinthians Chapter 9 verse 1 he says, "Am I not an apostle?" Well he's an apostle. And he seems to be saying he's an apostle in a technical sense. But he also makes it very clear he's the apostle of the Gentiles. What about Matthias? Well I guess we'll have to find out one day. But there will be 12 names written on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem and they will be the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And there's nothing in the context, as some commentators rightly point out, there's nothing in the context that says what they did was wrong and that they pick the wrong guy. Some people because they question the means by which they chose him, casting lots,

and I'm going to say it's the final means and it was an Old Testament sanctioned way of determining things when all else was all exhausted. They say, "Well, then Matthias isn't the 12th." Well there's nothing in the context here really to lead me to that conclusion. But you're going to say Paul seem to technically affirm himself as an apostle and that he did. But I'm not sure that's going to take the place of Matthias. We'll wait and see.

Nevertheless, choose your leaders wisely. When you have an opportunity to weigh in you better make sure that the standard is what it is in Scripture. We didn't even have time to get to it. First Timothy Chapter 3. Titus Chapter 1. We've dealt with all that in sermons past and it's on the back. There are a lot of sermons there that deal with all the requirements, both in terms of their piety and their relationship with God, and their knowledge and their training and I'll just refer you to that list, along with a lot of books that might be helpful as well. If you aspire to leadership, it says in First Timothy Chapter 3 verse 1, you aspire to a good thing. You desire to do something good. But we have to affirm that through many means including your training, your love for God, your qualifications.

Now with all that said, and I know I run the risk of like, "Hey, we're leaders!" It ain't about us. As one of my pastor mentors said it's like we're the finger in a bucket of water. Even as the most important pastor of our generation, if you happen to be, if you were to pull your finger out, God is just going to replace you. And he will. We know and I affirm with what Paul said in First Corinthians 3 we are nothing, Apollos is nothing, as powerful a preacher that he was. Peter was nothing, the first senior pastor of the first megachurch in the New Testament. Nothing. Paul says, "I'm nothing. We're just servants through whom you believed. It's God who causes the growth."

Matter of fact, when Peter talks about being a shepherd in the church and there's authority and leadership in that, he says this: We're all under-shepherds. The Chief Shepherd is going to appear, First Peter 5. And you know he's the one we're going to hope to get our approval from. He's going to give us the crown. Even in the passage that says, "Obey your leaders," in Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 17, "Obey and submit to them," it goes on to say really what we can't wait for is the return of "the Great Shepherd of the Sheep, who through the blood of the eternal covenant," he bought us and purchased us. We know this about leadership. The Church goes on when Peter dies, the Church goes on when Paul dies, the Church goes on when Augustine dies, the church goes on, Chrysostom dies, the Church goes on when Calvin dies and Luther dies and Zwingli dies and Spurgeon dies. The Church moves on because those guys aren't the leaders of the Church. The Church goes on because the Chief Shepherd still maintains leadership in the Church. We are just servants of his. I want you to value leadership, human leadership, but I want you to always be looking to the Chief Shepherd. Don't be disillusioned because there's some problem with an under-shepherd. Love them, respect them, encourage them, don't let them be despised unless they've done something to be despised by. But I'm telling you, keep your eyes on Christ.

I thought it'd be good for us as a compliment and even a contrast to what we've been talking about to end our time together with a celebration of the Lord's Supper. I'm going to ask the ushers to come down and if you are a Christian I'm asking you to participate by putting your focus on the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. I'd like for you to be in good stead with your pastors. I'd like for you to give a great response to your leaders so that they do their job with joy and they love serving you. That would be awesome. But even if you're at odds with every human pastor in the world I want you to be in sync with the Great Shepherd.

And we have a chance to do that just by looking at our lives and examining our lives. And I trust that there are good shepherds around, under-shepherds. You are going to be challenged to get right with them as well, but let's start with what's most important. The God through whom everything comes and his Lord, his Christ, who is the one who we've got to make sure we're right with. So take those elements and if you would, if you've never done the Lord's Supper with us, just hang onto those for a few minutes. Spend some time privately talking to the Lord and in about four minutes when everyone gets served I'll come right back up here and we'll take these elements at the same time, we'll take them together. But be sure you spend some time talking to God about where you stand with him and make sure there's nothing uncontested between you and the Lord. Make sure your focus and your greatest love and devotion and joy and allegiance is unrivaled toward the Lord, Jesus Christ. Keep your focus on him the Great Shepherd of the Sheep. I'll be back in a few minutes to take our elements here together.



The Apostle Paul gave instructions to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper and I love the way that he starts that, First Corinthians 11 verse 23, he says, "For what I received from the Lord I also delivered to you." On the night he was betrayed he took bread, and he goes on to talk about the Lord's Supper. That's a great picture of what leadership in the Church should be all about. Our job is to do what we can to deliver to you the things that the Lord has instructed in his Word. We're trying to take what God has given and it's not always easy to understand, as Peter says even of Paul's writings. I mean, "some things in them are hard to understand which the unstable, they twist and they contort it to their own destruction." So we know that there needs to be great care in learning to rightly handle the word of truth. But don't mistake what real under-shepherds are about. Our job is to try and deliver to you God's Word so that you can grow close to God. That's the point. It's between you and the ultimate Shepherd. We want to see people grow close to God. We want them to know the Lord, we want them to draw near to him. And that's the goal of everything we do in pastoral leadership. That's the goal. That's the point.

So I hope that God is working through the leaders of this church or, however you listen on the radio, for your home church that you have pastors, church leaders, who are doing that job. It's not about them, it's not about collecting leaders for them. That's not the point. Matter of fact, that's a sign of a problem. It's a sign of false teachers. But really, it's about you leaving every time you encounter these leaders in your life drawing nearer to the Lord, learning more of what the Lord says, learning more of what Christ taught. And in the first chronologically recorded God-breathed words about the Lord's Supper, we assume from First Corinthians 11 we get the instruction that on the night that Christ was betrayed, he took the cup, he said this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. And he wanted us to do this as he ends that passage as a proclamation of the Lord's death until he comes, as something we do in remembrance of him.

Last weekend we engaged in the ordinance of baptism. We saw a lot of baptisms here. This week the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. A chance for us to tangibly ingest these two elements, a modified form of the Passover, without the lamb because the lamb has been slain. We take this bread as a symbol of his body and the cup as a sign and symbol of his blood and we remember Christ's death that makes us right with the Father. That's why we cling to Christ, we want to be close to Christ. We want all of our leaders, all of our teachers, all of our Christian authors to lead us to Christ. So I hope that you feel as though you've drawn close to Christ today. You trust in the Lord I'd like you to do, as Scripture instructs, for us to take this bread and eat it in remembrance of Christ, to drink this cup in remembrance of the Lord. Let's do that together now.

God, even as we feel that taste of the bread and the cup, we remember the blood that was shed on behalf of our sin that you absorbed. The wrath, the penalties, more than a gruesome, torturous death. It was beyond the physical pain although that was excruciating I'm sure. It was about you receiving the punishment from a just God that we deserved and so God we thank you for that great demonstration of your love toward us that while we were still sinners you died for us. God let us draw near to you even as we close with one last lyric of a song here today, leaving this place with a sense that you are a God who's demonstrated your love and we want to love you more, we want to respond you better, we want to be the kinds of people who represent you faithfully in our generation. Please use our church. Use every church leader here to assist us in that goal.

In Jesus name. Amen.