

Main Idea: By looking at the book of Titus, we’re going to answer three questions regarding the church, and particularly, church leadership.

I. What does a church need?

According to Titus...

- A. A church needs godly leaders (ch 1).
- B. A church needs godly members (ch 2).
- C. A church needs a godly reputation in a community (ch 3).

II. How should a church function?

- A. A church needs elders that lead (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-8).
 - 1. They must have Christ-like character.
 - 2. They must make the gospel attractive, starting at home.
 - 3. They must be men who can defend and teach the Word.
 - 4. They must be men who can work with people, especially problem people.
 - 5. They must have a shepherd to lead them.
- B. A church needs deacons that serve (1 Tim 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6).
 - 1. They must have a godly testimony (8).
 - 2. They must know the Word (9).
 - 3. They must be proven servants (10).
 - 4. They must have God-honoring families (11-12).
 - 5. They must protect the pastoral ministry of the Word (Acts 6:3-4).
- C. A church needs a congregation that makes the gospel attractive (Titus 2:10).

III. What are the implications for WBC?

- A. We must see church structure as vital gift from God.
- B. We must see church structure as a way to reflect God’s glory.
- C. We must see that church structure is fluid.
 - 1. We need to keep growing in our understanding.
 - 2. We need to keep growing future elders and deacons.

These are interesting days to be a leader. Two days ago, amidst a firestorm of criticism, the board of trustees at Penn State University terminated the most winning football coach in NCAA history, Joe Paterno. It didn’t have anything to do with how his teams performed on the field. It had to do, we’re told, with his failure to sufficiently address the inappropriate actions of one of his assistant coaches, a coach who was arrested last Saturday and charged with 40 felony counts of sexual abuse involving young boys.

Three days ago, Al Mohler, the president of Southern Seminary, posted a helpful article entitled “The Tragic Lessons of Penn State—A Call to Action.” I’d like to read part of it:

Every single coach, athletic director, and college or university president awoke this morning to a changed world. Nothing will ever be the same again. The firing of Joe Paterno will send shock waves through the entire world of higher education. A man who a day before had announced under pressure that he would retire at the end of the season was told by phone that he would never coach another game. Penn State University will forever be associated with a scandal the likes of which college athletics has, thankfully, never seen before.

But the world has not only changed for college athletics. The detonation of the Penn State scandal must shake the entire nation into a new moral awareness. Any failure to report and to stop the sexual abuse of children must be made inconceivable. The moral irresponsibility that Penn State officials demonstrated in

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

this tragedy may well be criminal. There can be no doubt that all of these officials bear responsibility for allowing a sexual predator to continue his attacks.

What about churches, Christian institutions, and Christian schools? The Penn State disaster must serve as a warning to us as well, for we bear an even higher moral responsibility.

The moral and legal responsibility of every Christian — and especially every Christian leader and minister — must be to report any suspicion of the abuse of a child to law enforcement authorities. Christians are sometimes reluctant to do this, but this reluctance is both deadly and wrong.

Sometimes Christians are reluctant to report suspected sexual abuse because they do not feel that they know enough about the situation. They are afraid of making a false accusation. This is the wrong instinct. We do not have the ability to conduct the kind of investigation that is needed, nor is this assigned to the church. This is the function of government as instituted by God (Romans 13). Waiting for further information allows a predator to continue and puts children at risk. This is itself an immoral act that needs to be seen for what it is.

A Christian hearing a report of sexual abuse within a church, Christian organization, or Christian school, needs to act in exactly the same manner called for if the abuse is reported in any other context. The church and Christian organizations must not become safe places for abusers. These must be safe places for children, and for all. Any report of sexual abuse must lead immediately to action. That action cannot fall short of contacting law enforcement authorities. A clear lesson of the Penn State scandal is this: Internal reporting is simply not enough.

After law enforcement authorities have been notified, the church must conduct its own work of pastoral ministry, care, and church discipline. This is the church's responsibility and charge. But these essential Christian ministries and responsibilities are not substitutes for the proper function of law enforcement authorities and the legal system. As Christians, we respect those authorities because we are commanded to do so...

Church leaders and pastors must decide now — not later — that we will respond to any report of sexual abuse with immediate action and an immediate call to law enforcement officials. We must decide in advance what we will do, and not allow ourselves to think that we can handle such a challenge on our own. Every church and Christian institution needs a full set of policies, procedures, and accountability structures. As leaders, we must develop the right instincts for right action.¹

This morning, as we finish our nine week series on marks of a healthy church, we come not coincidentally to this critical ninth mark. As a church, WBC is committed to *biblical church leadership*.

Even the world knows that an organization needs the right leadership, and that those in leadership positions must lead rightly or else. But who is supposed to lead the church? The smartest people? The most likeable? The biggest donors? Those with the most tenure? If a person holds a powerful position in the community, or at work, does that mean he qualifies to lead in the church? For that matter, does it have to be a "he"?

¹ Albert Mohler, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2011/11/10/the-tragic-lessons-of-penn-state-a-call-to-action/>

And then we come to another set of questions. What are we supposed to call our leaders? What should we expect of our leaders? What should leaders expect of those under their care?

As always, we don't take a poll to answer these questions. We don't even turn to our by-laws or our polity books, not initially. We turn to God's Word. We want to know what God says about this subject, and thankfully, He has a lot to say.

For starters, He addresses the *why* question. Some might say, "Structure doesn't matter, does it, as long as you get the job done." But it does matter, and frankly, we have no right to impose a school board structure on the church, or a corporate structure from the business world, or throw out structure altogether as an anti-authority thinker might suggest. Why are these approaches unacceptable? Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 3:14–15, "Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth."

Notice, the church is *God's household*. It's the church *of the living God*. And in His Word God gives us the basic structure He wants to see in His church.

Why would He do that? In short, it's because He wants His church to reflect Him and what He's like. He's a Triune God, three persons with distinct roles, and the persons demonstrate perfect love for each other by fulfilling these roles. So when a church takes biblical polity seriously, it's putting God on display for the world to see.

I'm not sure any book in the Bible illustrates the power of church polity any more clearly than does the little epistle Paul wrote to Titus. Let's turn to Titus, where we're going to answer three important questions regarding the church, and particularly, church leadership.

I. What does a church need?

Paul sent this letter to Titus around AD 63-65. Titus was on the island of Crete where he and Paul had done evangelistic work. After the Lord saved some people, Paul moved on to another ministry, but he left Titus behind. As he explains in 1:5, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished..."

So this book is sort of a church planting manual. You have some baby Christians, but there's no structure yet, no polity in place, and really, not even a church. That's Titus's job, to set up the structure. If these young believers in Crete were ever going to do what Paul had done all over the Roman Empire, to reach lost communities for Christ, they needed something, three things in fact. Scan this letter and you'll see what any church needs if it's to reach a community.

A. A church needs godly leaders. That's assignment #1 as Paul makes clear in chapter one. Notice 1:5, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished *and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*" Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? He knew the church would never survive, let alone make Christ known to others, unless it had proper leadership in place. I left you to *appoint elders*, says Paul, *in every town*.

And notice, "as I directed you." Apparently, Paul had given Titus a verbal assignment when he left Crete, but I get the sense Titus hadn't completed the job yet. So Paul is now following up with this written reminder. *Get those elders in place, Titus.*

What are elders, and why does a church need them? We'll see in a moment when we take a closer look at chapter one. But what else does a church need? Godly leaders, then...

B. A church needs godly members. That's what chapter two is all about. Verse 1, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." So Titus was to teach. Teach whom? "Teach the older men," says verse 2. "Teach the older women," says verse 3. Instruct the older women to "train the younger women," says verse 4. "Encourage the young men," says verse 6. "Teach slaves," says verse 9.

Teach them what? In essence, to live godly lives that, as verse 10 explains, "makes the teaching about God our Savior attractive." Beloved, unless your lost neighbors *see* it, they're not going to *hear* it. If this community is ever going to hear what we have to say about our Savior, they must see it first. They must see the evidence of our Savior at work in our lives. They must see that we "say no to ungodliness and worldly passions," verse 12, and that we "live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives," while we wait for our Savior to come back, verse 13.

But these are just young Christians in Crete. And they've come from nasty pasts (see 1:12). You can't expect young Christians with nasty pasts to live godly lives, can you? God's Word says you can, and must. God's grace makes change possible, says Paul in 2:11. And the leader's task is to teach them how, and hold them accountable. As Paul stresses in verse 15, "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you."

So here's one of the main reasons you need leaders, to insist that those under their care live properly. Penn State's learning that the hard way. Ohio State learned the same thing earlier in the year. A leader cannot turn a deaf ear to what the Bible calls sin issues.

And in the church the stakes are even higher, because our aim isn't just to win ball games. Our aim is to give the world around us a clear picture of our Savior. Friends, God's Son left heaven and ultimately died on a cross and rose again in order to save sinners *from their sins*. When a person claims to know Christ yet remains in unrepentant sin, it sends a very conflicting message to the lost about our Savior.

So a church needs, first, godly leaders, then a godly congregation. Thirdly...

C. A church needs a godly reputation in a community. That's what chapter three is all about. "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities," says Paul in verse 1, "to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good." Christians ought to be the best citizens in any community, the most loyal, law-keeping, and caring people in town. "And I want you to stress these things," says Paul in verse 8, "so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good."

So there's the first question. What does a church need? If it's going reach a community with the gospel, a church needs godly leaders, godly members, and a godly reputation. Now, since it all starts with *godly leadership*, let's go back to Titus 1 and address a second question.

II. How should a church function?

Several weeks ago I went into a McDonalds just outside of Los Angeles, and you know what it looked like? Just like the one I've seen in Bucharest, and Bangkok, and Wheelersburg. You've seen one, you've seen them all. They're all basically the same.

Is that the way the church is, all the same? No. When you read the New Testament and compare the churches, you'll find some differences, due to culture, language, giftedness of the people, etc. But you'll also find some basic similarities. Of course, it starts with a common faith, based on a common gospel, and a common commitment to the one Savior, Jesus Christ.

But there are also functional commonalities. When you read the epistles, you find out that churches, regardless of cultural differences, need three things to function as God

intends. I'll give them to you now, and then we'll look at them individually. A church needs elders that lead, deacons that serve, and a congregation that makes the gospel attractive.

A. A church needs elders that lead (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 3:1-8). In Titus 1:5 Paul told Titus, "Appoint elders in every town." That's the same action we see Paul and Barnabas taking when they started churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, for Acts 14:23 says, "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church."

Let's think about the terms Paul uses. In verse 5 he says 'elders' (Greek, *presbuteros*). But in verse 7 he shifts to 'overseer' (KJV 'bishop'; Greek, *episkopos*). The terms are closely related, if not interchangeable.

"Elder" here refers to a man, not a woman, for she has a different God-given and equally important role in the church. Titus was to *appoint* elders ['ordain' in the KJV], indicating this is an office in the church. The term "elder" has a Jewish background. In the synagogue the elders led the assembly. So in the church. *Elder* points to a man's reputation and standing. He may well be older in years than the rest, though not necessarily. But without question he must demonstrate maturity and stability. He's not a novice but a man who, by God's grace, has a proven and respected walk with Christ.

The elder is also an *overseer* ['bishop'], a term referring to his function or duty. He has the ability to give godly oversight, to lead God's people in a way that reflects the leadership of the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. He functions as Christ's under-shepherd, and thus must possess the ability to feed and lead sheep.

Put the two terms together and you conclude this. To qualify as a leader in God's church takes both character and conduct. God's interested both in what a man *is* and what a man *does*.

Note that the word 'elders' in verse 5 is plural. Paul told Titus to appoint *elders* in every town. We see the same in 1 Peter 5:1, "To the elders among you I appeal as a fellow elder." That's interesting. Peter was an apostle, but here, thirty years after Christ returned to heaven, he calls himself a fellow elder. The apostle John does the same thing in 2 John and 3 John, introducing himself simply as "The elder." While the apostles led the church in the early years, that was transitional. Now God intends His church to be led by *elders*.

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching," says Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17. "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him..." says James 5:14. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you."

The point is, God does not intend His church to be a one-man show. Churches need a team of godly men who are qualified to lead the sheep where the Good Shepherd wants them to go. How many elders was Titus to appoint? We're not told. How many elders should our church have? The Bible doesn't give a number, certainly no more than are qualified, but more than one if we're to meet the standard. Do all elders have the same function? In my opinion, not exactly. While all can teach, as we'll see, not all teach in the same capacity. And one of the elders must serve as the lead-elder, the shepherd, the one designated as the *pastor*.

Now, what are the qualifications for elders? Paul gives at least fifteen in verses 6-8. In 1 Timothy 3:1-8 you'll see a similar list. For time sake, I've put them in five categories.

1. *They must have Christ-like character.* Notice verse 6, "An elder must be blameless." He repeats the word in verse 7, "Since an overseer is entrusted with

God's work, he must be blameless." It's a strong word, "**blameless**" (*anegkletos*), free from accusation, irreproachable. It's not suggesting perfection, but rather that there are no skeletons in the man's closet, no unaddressed sin issues that would cloud his testimony.

And to flesh out what "blameless" looks like, Paul gives some other qualities...

"not overbearing" (*authades*) – the word means arrogant, stubborn, self-willed. It's the person who views decisions as "his way or the highway," who resists input from others because he's always right.

"not quick tempered" (*orgilos*) – It refers to the person who has a short fuse, who is irritable and it doesn't take much to set him off.

"not given to drunkenness" – The elder must be under the control of the Spirit, not the spirits. Substances don't control him, alcohol for sure, but it would also include narcotics, nicotine, even food.

"not violent" (*plektes*) – The term refers to a contentious and quarrelsome person who loves to fight. The church can't afford to have that kind of person in a leadership position.

"not pursuing dishonest gain" (*aischrokerdes*) – A person who's looking for a quick buck even if it means bending the rules to get it isn't qualified to lead in the church.

On a positive note, the elder must be...

"hospitable" (*philoxenos*) – literally, the word means "loving strangers." It refers to the person who is generous to guests. He doesn't wait for others to take the initiative. He does as His Savior did. He takes the first step. He goes up to the new person. He invites the stranger to his home, shares his food and his life with the stranger so that in a short time that stranger is no longer a stranger.

"one who loves what is good" (*philagathos*) – In a world that mocks goodness and morality, the church needs leaders who not only talk about it, but *love* it. Some men are quick to write a letter to a congressman to try to legislate goodness (and there's a place for letter writing), but the church needs people, especially elders, who *love what is good*. It shows up in our movie selection, our music choices, what kind of jokes we laugh at, and so on. An elder is to be a *lover of good*.

"self-controlled" (*sophron*) – to be of sound mind, to behave in a sensible manner. It carries the idea of "disciplined." The person whose life is out of control is not qualified to be an elder in God's church. This applies to his spending habits, his eating habits, the amount of time he spends watching television, on Facebook, playing sports, and so on. He lives a balanced, under control life.

"upright" (*dikaios*) – righteous, and by implication, innocent. If you want to know how to please God, imitate an *upright* person for his walk is consistent with God's righteous standard.

"holy" (*hosios*) – It's used of God in several passages where He is referred to as "the Holy One" (Acts 2:27; Rev. 16:5). If there's something the contemporary church needs today, it's *holiness*. And who is supposed to set the example? The elders are.

"disciplined" (*egkrates*) – strong, master of, controlling, curbing, restraining. It's the opposite of a feeling-oriented approach to life. Sin always "feels" natural to a sinner. Godliness doesn't "feel" natural, not at first. That's why Paul told Timothy, "Train yourself to be godly (1 Tim. 4:7)."

What do the above traits have in common? They are all characteristics that Christ demonstrated, right? So when you see them they illustrate Christ. And that's the role of the elders, to model Christ. And that starts with character. But it doesn't stop there.

2. *They must make the gospel attractive, starting at home.* That's verse 6. Right after "blameless," Paul elaborates with, "the husband of but one wife," literally, a "one woman man." There's some difference of opinion about this, but the bottom line is clear. A one-woman man is a man who is devoted in his heart and life to the woman to whom he made a covenant promise. He loves her, gives his heart only to her, and thinks only of her. He finds sexual fulfillment with her alone. He flees from all sexual temptation (that includes not only the woman at work but also the woman on his computer screen) in order to demonstrate his covenant loyalty to his wife, in the fear of God.

This was a huge issue in the Roman empire. The typical man did not marry until around the age of thirty (in contrast, girls normally married around age fourteen). It was taken for granted that before he married (and even after) he would "sow his wild oats." The Greeks had what they called the "men's hall" where they engaged in socially accepted sex. Some men had one or more concubines among the slave-girls of their household. It was quite accepted that a married man have, in addition to his wife, another woman (or more than one woman) with whom he had relations.²

But what's common in society has no place in the church. So who's going to pave the way? The elders must. God says an elder must be a *one-woman man*.

Furthermore, he must be "a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient." One of the prime tasks of a church leader is to pass on the faith to others, and that begins in his home. Paul gives a similar emphasis in 1 Timothy 3:4-5, "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)"

The point is, if a man is to be an elder, his life must make the gospel attractive, starting at home. The next category takes us to a very specific function the elders perform.

3. *They must be men who can defend and teach the Word.* Verse 9 says, "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." "Able to teach," says Paul in 1 Timothy 3:2. The elders are the gatekeepers in the church. They must both know God's Word and know how to use the Word, both to *encourage* and *refute*. How do they encourage? By sharing sound doctrine. Who do they refute? Those who oppose sound doctrine. Which brings us to the fourth category...

4. *They must be men who can work with people, especially problem people.* Verse 10 says, "For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers..." Verse 11 says, "They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach." "Rebuke them sharply," says Paul in verse 13, "so that they will be sound in the faith."

Friends, a church needs godly elders who can do that. They know God's Word, and they know how to work with problem people, tactfully, wisely, biblically. When they become aware of someone whose life and/or teaching isn't in accord with God's Word, they go talk to the person, with an open Bible, and loving rebuke them, if necessary. So "they will be sound in the faith," says Paul in verse 13, and so the church likewise will remain true to the faith.

There's something else that elders need.

² Zondervan *Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Titus, p. 502.

5. *They must have a shepherd to lead them.* In Ephesians 4:11-12 we're told that Christ gave pastors to the church to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The term "pastor" means shepherd. Sheep belong to one shepherd, and they know his voice and will follow him. But interestingly, sheep will also follow others who care for them as long as they know their shepherd trusts them.

So put Ephesians 4 and Titus 1 together, and here's what I think we see. While a church needs a plurality of elders who each have a shepherding role, there must be a lead shepherd of the shepherds and of the flock. In this epistle we see Titus giving direction to the elders in Crete. So did Peter with the elders in 1 Peter 5, and John in 2 John. They called themselves elders, but they also led the elders under their care. In Acts 20:17ff we see Paul leading the elders. The point is, a team of elders leads a church, but someone must lead the elders, and therefore, ultimately, leads the church. In our circles, that person is often called the senior pastor, or the lead pastor.

Someone might say, "Well, they were apostles. Does this distinction still apply?" 1 Timothy 5:17 seems to indicate so. There Paul seems to distinguish between elders, all of whom "direct the affairs of the church," and elders "whose work is preaching and teaching."

We're trying to answer the question, "How should a church function?" Here's the first truth we've discovered. According to God's Word, a church needs elders that lead.

B. A church needs deacons that serve (1 Tim 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6). It's worth noting that you don't see the position of *deacon* mentioned in Titus. In a brand new church, you don't need deacons, not yet. You need elders, for sure, men who can model and teach the Word, disciple young believers, and give direction. It won't be long, however, before you'll need to develop a second office to protect the first.

That's what we find in 1 Timothy. Why 1 Timothy? Because Paul wrote this letter to Timothy who was serving, not in an infant church, like Titus was, but in a church in Ephesus that's been growing for a while, a ten year old pre-teen church. So in chapter three he gives qualifications, first for overseers/elders (verses 1-7), and then for deacons (verses 8-13).

Basically, the qualifications for elders and deacons are quite similar, the main difference being the elder must be able to teach. What's true of deacons?

1. *They must have a godly testimony (8).* "Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain." And while deacons aren't required to teach the Word...

2. *They must know the Word (9).* "They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience."

3. *They must be proven servants (10).* "They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons." The term "deacon" means "one who serves." So before you give a man the title, he must prove himself to be indeed one who serves his church.

The test questions go like this. Is he faithful to the church? Does he participate in all its services? Has he done other jobs well in the church? Does he have a glad heart when he serves? Is he a man of the Book? Does he have good relationships with people? For those men of whom the answer is yes, verse 10 says, "let them serve as deacons."

Of course, there's another vital area to check closely...

4. *They must have God-honoring families (11-12).* "In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well."

What's the evidence that a man has a God-honoring family? Two things. Verse 11, his wife is godly. And verse 12, his house is in order. Deacons are role models in the church, and so are their wives. They show the rest of us how to serve.

Perhaps you're thinking, "Wow! God's standard is high. Why would anyone want to be a deacon?" Here's a reason, verse 13, "Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."

There's one other thing that's true of deacons. It's at the heart of why they exist.

5. *They must protect the pastoral ministry of the Word (Acts 6:3-4).*

While the term "deacon" means "one who serves," the fact is, both elders serve too (and so should all church members). But by God's design they serve in different ways.

In Acts 6 we see a great illustration of this distinction. The apostles gathered the church together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word in order to wait on tables (verse 2)." The solution? Verses 3-4, "Choose seven men... We will turn this ministry over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word." Literally, "to *deaconing* the Word."

So here we see some men serving the Word and other men serving tables. Church ministry includes both deaconing the Word and deaconing the practical needs of the people. Both are vital. And they are distinct, as we see both in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

Deacons exist, not to do the pastoral ministry of the Word, but to protect it. If a church fails to distinguish the two positions of elder and deacon, both types of ministry end up suffering.

For instance, when a pastor, the lead elder, unlocks the church building, replaces furnace filters, delivers meals to widows, stocks the food pantry, and sets up tables for church socials, what's he doing? You say, "He's serving." Yes, but how? He's serving tables, and if he's not careful he will end up neglecting the ministry God has called him to do in the church, the ministry of the Word and prayer. It's not that he is above waiting on tables and replacing filters, and sometimes he will do such things. But he must not allow the ministry of tables to shortchange his ministry of the Word.

Now turn it around. In some churches, deacons see themselves as a governing board. But when a deacon assumes the role of overseer, when he tries to govern the church and determine its direction, what's the result? He's stepped into someone else's role and ends up taking away time from what God called him to do and the church needs him to do, *servicing*. Deacons are to serve the people of the church (like widows), serve the physical needs of the church (like feeding the poor), and serve the ministry of the Word in the church (which includes everything from caring for facility needs, and budget matters, and addressing potential distractions in the church, all of which make it possible for us to hear God's Word preached on Sunday).

Pastor Steve Viars shares a helpful illustration. "A deacon's job is very similar to that of an anesthesiologist when a surgeon is performing an operation. Both the surgeon and the anesthesiologist are needed in the operating room. However, although the anesthesiologist is very important, he is not the surgeon. If the anesthesiologist ever leaves his post, and lunges for the scalpel, the patient is in grave danger."

So a church needs elders that lead, and deacons that serve. One more thing...

C. A church needs a congregation that makes the gospel attractive (Titus 2:10). Back to Titus 2:10 where we find this purpose clause. "So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive." Paul's talking about teaching slaves here, but it applies to the whole church. Here's why elders teach and deacons serve, so the whole congregation will make the gospel attractive to an onlooking world.

III. What are the implications for WBC?

I want to mention three.

A. We must see church structure as vital gift from God. It's vital, meaning we can't do without it. And it's a gift from our generous God. He gave us His Son, His Spirit, His Word, and today we've been reminded He has given us teaching on church structure, which is for our good. That's critical to see in a society that increasingly attacks authority structures.

B. We must see church structure as a way to reflect God's glory. When we do church, we have the privilege to show the world around us what God is like. When we submit to authority, we're resembling Christ who submitted to His Father's authority. When we serve, we're doing what our Savior did, who served by giving His life as a ransom for us. When we do things decently and in order, we're demonstrating the power of grace that turned our once messed up lives into something now decent and in order!

C. We must see that church structure is fluid. It's not static, but developing. We saw that when we compared the church in Crete with the church in Ephesus. They needed elders in Crete. They needed both elders and deacons in Ephesus because the church was more developed. What's that mean for us?

1. *We need to keep growing in our understanding of church polity.* Back in April, WBC turned 133 years old. In our current polity, we have pastors, deacons, trustees, and a treasurer, that comprise what we call "the combined board." In light of what we've just seen, is "board" a good label for us to use to describe our leadership? Who are the elders at WBC? Do we have a plurality? Should we? Are our current deacons really functioning as elders, and if so, should we call them that? Are our trustees really functioning as deacons, and if so, should we call them that? In the upcoming year we're going to try to answer those questions, first in studies I'll be leading with our deacons, and then with you as a congregation.

One more implication. If we see that church structure is fluid, it means...

2. *We need to keep growing future elders and deacons.* And for that matter, nursery workers, and youth workers, and other workers, too. We can't just "do" church. We must constantly be preparing for tomorrow's church. Who will be leading and serving WBC in five years? Just sitting in a pew for five years doesn't prepare a man to be an elder or deacon or trustee or Sunday School teacher, etc. If you're currently in one of those positions, I urge you to be grooming others to serve with you. And if you have aspirations of serving, especially in a shepherding capacity, I urge you to take advantage of growth opportunities, like this winter's CDT on Monday evenings. Or if your heart leans towards a support ministry, then talk to our trustee chairman today, for we currently need willing servants to join the team that cleans this wonderful facility.

It's all about reflecting His glory. So let's keep shining for Him!