

# God's Gift of Elders to His Church

by Mack Tomlinson

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*This sermon focuses on God's gift of elders to His church, as outlined in Titus 1:5-9. It emphasizes the qualities and responsibilities of elders, highlighting the importance of being blameless, apt to teach, and holding fast to sound doctrine. The sermon also includes a special commissioning and prayer for the new elder, Brian, and his wife, Michelle, as they step into this role with a focus on spiritual gifts, graces, and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Titus 1:5, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 4:14, Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, Hebrews 13:7

**Topics:** "Eldership", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

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## Transcript

The New Testament text for the morning is Titus chapter 1. I invite you to look at that. Titus 1, verses 5-9. I'm going to speak this morning on God's gift of elders to His church.

God's gift of elders to His church. Titus 1, verses 5-9. Let's hear the very voice of God in His Word.

Paul says to Titus, For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed you. If anyone is blameless, the husband or one wife, having faithful children, not accused of rioting or being unruly, for a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed, not given to anger, not addicted to wine, not a fighter or a striker, not greedy for money, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate, holding fast to the faithful word as He has been taught, that He may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers or the unruly or the unbelievers who would argue. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You that this is the Word You have given through Paul to the church over all the ages. And You've given it to us this morning. So we look to You and ask for Your help and Your blessing.

Lord, I am inadequate always. We are insufficient for these things always. And this morning, You must speak.

We ask You to speak. And we are inadequate to even work up spiritual hearing or a fresh faith. So give us spiritual eyes to see.

Give us ears within our hearts to hear. And give us grace that You would speak, that You would work, that You would bless for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, for Brian and Michelle's equipping, and for the growth and profit of Providence Chapel and the Kingdom of God across the world. Thank You, Father, that You hear us.

In Christ's name, Amen. It was October and November of 2013 that two families walked into Providence Chapel at the Denton Senior Citizen Center. At first glance, questionable characters maybe.

Good looking folk. Why are they here? The first couple, Jared and Joanne Courtney. Sunday, October 27th.

And the Elsie's the next week, November 3rd. Ten years, two months, and eleven days ago. And right now.

Best friends they were and are. And they were on a journey together, seriously pursuing the Lord. And were looking for a biblical church.

From that time, ten years ago, they never stopped coming here. So I just want us to pause. Whether you're new here, or whether you've been here from that day they walked in our church.

You've observed, Brian and Michelle Elsie, you've observed Jared and Joanne Courtney. And you know what God has given to our church and their lives. As a result of them finding out about little old Providence Chapel.

Both of them became deacons in the coming years. And both families have been an immense blessing to this church and to many others. And by the way, the same could be said of David and Marisa Halslander and all the Halslander family.

David as a deacon, the Halslanders as servants to this church. So this day, I'm telling you, the Lord is giving this church a very special gift. And here's the gift.

Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart. So wrote Jeremiah. That's better than a birthday present.

Even when you're 70, we had an awesome birthday party and gifts. This is far better, Brian Elsie, being given to Providence Chapel. Now the elders are going to benefit greatly.

We already are. But equally, the great beneficiary of this gift will be each of you. Each one of you.

You're already experiencing that over these years and months. And it's growing and getting better. There could have been 30 more testifying and praying about this topic this morning.

And I'm telling you as a member of Providence Chapel, or if you are coming here and this is your spiritual home, I'm telling you that your growth in grace is related to this gift this morning of you having another

pastor. I will give you shepherds after my own heart who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Today is another fulfilling of that ongoing prophecy by Jeremiah.

He read Ephesians 4 and he referenced the fact that that is being fulfilled today. Jeremiah's prophecy is being fulfilled today. I will give you shepherds after my own heart.

Christ's treasurer is His church. And He gives to her what is best. No leftovers.

Not some guy from the thrift shop spiritually. He chooses the right men. And I don't mean better than other men.

I don't mean that. The Lord takes common men who are sinners from all walks of life. And He makes them shepherds of His people.

It doesn't matter what their background is. It doesn't matter what their past sin or their education is or their natural giftedness. All kinds of men are handpicked by Christ for His work.

Bad guys and good guys. Well knowns and unknowns. God uses men, sinful men, forgiven men, available men, surrendered men.

Men given to His church for His purpose of grace to build His kingdom. As elders and deacons. And by the way, choice men and women and servants throughout the church who don't hold an office.

Christ brings people to a church for them to benefit the church and for them to be built up. Some wise and noble. Some not so much.

Skinny kids from the cotton farms of West Texas. And even custom home builders. He chooses.

The Lord takes men and He breaks them. And He molds them. And He remakes them.

And calls them into the gospel ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is real Christianity. This is biblical Christianity.

For some who would hear this today, it's strange. They think this is too serious. This is too radical.

I'm telling you, this is biblical Christianity. What God has done in the kingdom of God, decade after decade, since the Lord Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the gospel went to all the world, and hundreds of thousands of churches have been planted, and God put elders and deacons in all of them over the centuries to build His kingdom. And He's still doing it today.

Rise up, O men of God. The church for you does wait. This is a very special day.

A very, very special day. John Calvin said this, It is no light matter to represent God's Son in such a great task as extending God's kingdom for the salvation of souls. Now in our text, Paul gives Titus a very specific directive.

Remember what it was? Titus 1.5. To appoint elders in every city. He means in local churches that had been started as a result of Paul's ministry. And this is what we're doing today as a church.

Not just us as elders. Us as a church are setting brine into the office of being a pastoring elder. That's what this morning is about.

Everyone in Providence Chapel should view this as a very holy and special occasion. When God adds the right man at the right time in the right place for the right ministry for such a time as this. January of 2024.

In 1st Sympathy 3 and Titus 1, Paul gives around 18 qualifying marks. Characteristics for any pastor. When you combine the two lists, you have three general categories.

One, personal character. Two, spiritual maturity. And three, biblical and theological ability.

So for the sake of time, I'm going to summarize these truths in my message. And it won't be a long message. But it's very narrowly directed to what kind of a man is to be put in the office of an elder.

Many churches see a rich guy join and six weeks later they'll make him a deacon. And they'll make him the chairman of the financial committee. That's not the way the Bible does things.

Right? I have three major headings this morning. Taken from these elder qualifications. One is a negative and two positives.

An elder must be, number one, not a novice. Number two, apt to teach. And number three, blameless.

So let's dive in to this and see the picture, the lens through which God appoints an elder. First, not a novice, Paul says. It means not a recent convert.

Not a new believer. This implies that this one must grow up into maturity. It implies tested maturity through experience.

Paul says a new Christian cannot be an elder. Why? Because he lacks wisdom and maturity. He's ignorant.

And that's not an offensive word. It means he doesn't know much. Right? I didn't hardly know anything when God called me into the ministry.

The novice lacks wisdom and maturity because he lacks experience. Because it takes real time for God to shape a man where he can be entrusted with ministry among the flock. It takes discipleship.

It takes growth long term. It takes being a sheep first before you're ever a shepherd. It takes that man observing and learning and looking at those who model, looking at the life of his mentors.

It takes him being submissive himself to spiritual leaders before he can expect others to respond properly to him. So Paul says, not a novice. In the summer of 1972, a good friend of Lynn and I in my hometown of Clarendon, Texas, her hometown, was converted.

We graduated from high school together. And within six months, our church put him teaching a boys class. It almost wiped him out spiritually.

He was a spiritual babe and wasn't ready. He couldn't take the pressure. And so he fell away for a period, left church, didn't want to be around me.

He didn't want me coming after him. I don't remember if I did, but he fell away for a little while. He was later restored and is still serving the Lord today.

He was a novice. There was a valid reason, Paul says, not a novice, right? That's a brief one, but that's all you need to say about it. An elder can't be a new believer.

He can't be untested. Time, like God growing an oak tree, God takes time for the process and He doesn't rush it. Secondly, an elder must be apt to teach.

Apt to teach says the King James Version. Most all other versions translate it able to teach. Is that what yours says, Darius? Able to teach? No pressure.

You can tell me later. Most all other versions say able to teach. It doesn't mean he's got to be a great preacher, but he can do that by God's grace when God gives him the opportunity.

In fact, it doesn't even say he must have the specific gift of prophecy that is proclaiming, meaning preaching. There is a difference between preaching gift and teaching gift, right? It doesn't mean he has to have the ability to greatly exhort from the Word, but he must be able to teach. And in the Greek New Testament, this phrase able to teach or apt to teach is one word.

And it just means that literally. Able to teach. Now, Titus 1 sheds more light on the meaning where Paul says an elder must hold firmly to the Word as He has been taught that he might be able to give instruction.

There it is again. In sound doctrine. So, an elder must be able.

Ability must be evident. So the qualification in here is the ability to do it. Whether in the church meeting, whether on Sunday night with the men, whether house to house, whether one-on-one with another person.

An elder must be sound theologically. Equipped with theological and biblical ability. He must be rooted and grounded in the truth of Scripture which can take years.

Years of being in the Scriptures, learning and growing in the truth. When I was first called to preach, if someone had asked me to find Hosea, it might have taken an hour. Learning and growing in the truth.

And then develops the ability to communicate it, right? Those who are charged with leading the people of God must be able to teach the people of God. Pastorally, relationally, accurately. So an elder must not be a novice.

And he must be able to teach. And we've seen this grow in Brian as we would ask him to take a prayer meeting as he's taught before. And even from the congregation and the sharing time before, at times, he would stand up and he would have a word and he would have an exhortation, encouragement.

And the Spirit of God would be on the time. Because as he was speaking, I remember such times. Able to communicate the truth of God as a shepherd.

And that will look different with different elders, right? Different pastors. Different giftings. Then finally, and perhaps the one that summarizes all the 17 or 18 qualifications given, is this one.

If any man aspires to the office of an elder, he must be blameless. What a word. What an all-encompassing word.

It's amazing. Paul begins with this qualification in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus. It's the first one he mentions.

Blameless. Isn't that a great summary? Haven't the members of Providence Chapel seen and observed truly this is a blameless man? Not perfect, but blameless. It means without reproach.

Not being able to point your finger at the man and say that in his life disqualifies him. No one can find a true fault that disqualifies him. So many things are taken care of if a man is viewed as blameless.

Any major concerns are addressed if a man is blameless. It's comprehensive in scope. If he's blameless, for instance, truly blameless, people know he's not a greedy man.

They know he doesn't have a problem with anger. You know he treats people properly. You know he has integrity across the board.

You know he has a good name and good behavior. You know that he truly loves people. Blameless means he's respected truly both in the church and in his community.

As Titus 1 says, he has a good testimony of those on the outside, outside the church. Such men in the workplace have this said about them. You know, I may not like his faith, but he's a good man.

I see how he treats people. I see how he treats his employees. How he responds to his boss.

He's respectful. He's diligent and he works hard. He's a genuine and real man.

I would work for that man and I would visit his church because of how he lives. Blameless. As the book of Acts says, a good man full of faith in the Holy Spirit.

That's what we're getting today in our new elder. To be considered blameless, a man must be free from any conduct that causes anyone to disrespect him. And positively, his life draws the respect of those who know him.

Now briefly also, think of the many other qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus which speak of character also and blamelessness. Must be gentle. Not reactionary to others.

Not impatient, but patient in working with people. Even who rub you the wrong way. Rules as well as his own home.

That is, he seeks to govern and lead his family and endeavors to do it well. That is character. He has the respect of his children.

He's given to hospitality which reveals about the couple and the home, they have a loving and welcoming heart and home. Bob Jennings one time told friends from Missouri the first time they came to Sedalia when they were leaving, Bob Jennings said to them, you always have a home when you come here. Given to hospitality.

And he uses his home for the Lord. Not given to anger, not quick tempered, not quarrelsome. And lives, the Bible says, must be holy.

Lives a holy and humble and real and godly attractive life. In summary, a blameless reputation. The Western television series Lonesome Dove, there's a scene, there's six or seven cowboys, all veterans of the Civil War, driving cattle from 19th century Texas all the way to Montana to establish a ranch on the beautiful land from raw beginnings and have a new life.

In one scene, Josh Dietz is the character's name, one of the cowboys, is killed by Comanche Indians when he stops to help an orphan boy who is wandering alone on the plains. The Indians fill him full of arrows. Next scene, his comrades, the cowboys are standing around his grave and there's a headstone.

One of them had carved words on the headstone. And one who can't read asks his friend, what's this headstone read? Robert Duvall, who plays the main character, reads it to his illiterate good friend who's crying. Here's what it read.

Serve with me for 30 years. Fought in 21 battles with the Comanches. Cheerful in all kinds of weather.

Never shirked a task and always had splendid behavior. That's what it reads. That was him.

Character. Character in blamelessness is a sermon in itself. And that's what an elder must have and be.

Now, I don't have to tell any of you this. You already know this. No pastor lives or does these things perfectly.

And the sad thing is, in the professing church today, many of them don't live these things and don't model it to the flock. And the sheep get scattered and wounded and hurt because churches don't follow Scripture on what qualifications must be. There are no perfect pastors.

But it's these qualities being evident in a man with consistency that qualifies a man to be an elder in Christ's church. Now Scripture says, let another man praise you and not yourself. So I get to say some things about Brian and Michelle.

I want to publicly recognize some things about them. I warned them. So, they don't know what I'm going to say, but I warned them.

I said, look, you know this is grace. The grace of God, not you. From the time they came into this church, they've been all in.

They have been faithful, exemplary servants. And speaking from personal observation, what I have noticed about Brian more in the last year than any other single thing is this, the growing Christ-centeredness of his life in his heart. The growing Gospel-centeredness.

He is always fixated on the Gospel and on Christ. He is all about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of his favorite songs is the one he asked us to sing this morning.

There is one Gospel on which I stand. Brian Elsie has a single eye and a united heart. He is sound in the Gospel.

He's always deeply moved by the Gospel. He hasn't lost the wonder of the Gospel. He's a man that dives deep in the Scriptures.

That reads wonderful books consistently and deeply. And he processes what he reads in Scripture and in books. He processes it and he applies it.

And he treasures what the Bible says to the church and the people of God. He is primarily about the glory of God and the person and honor of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. He has a very busy businessman with much responsibility.

Now as we set our new elder into the office this morning, there are two indispensable needs the pastor has. And we're going to pray specifically in a few moments for God to give these things. Number one, spiritual gifts and graces.

Spiritual gifts to be imparted to him for the work of the ministry. And secondly, more of the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit in his life and through his ministry. For Brian, let's pray this morning for these two things especially.

Number one, spiritual gifts and graces imparted through the laying on of hands. 1 Timothy 4.14 says this, Do not neglect the gift within you which was given you by the laying on of hands of the presbytery. And 2 Timothy 1.6, I remind you not to neglect the spiritual gift given you through the laying on of my hands.

Now in the book of Acts, there are two occasions of this. Acts 6.6, the seven men, new leaders, Luke records, and they prayed for them and laid hands upon them. Acts 13.3, Paul and Barnabas are going out of the church at Antioch.

When they prayed and fasted, they laid hands on them and sent them. Sent them out to their new work. I want us to pray for God to do this this morning.

The giving of gifts and the giving of the power of the Spirit upon Brian for the work of the ministry. You shall receive power. After that, the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me.

Let's pray. Then we're going to sing and then one of our pastors, Philip Neely, will come and give the church an exhortation briefly and then we will have the laying on of hands. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that You do call men continually all over the world as You build Your church. You call men to be laborers in the kingdom. To be vessels.

To be preachers and teachers. Evangelists. Pastors.

Deacons. And You set faithful men and women in biblical churches all the time to benefit the body of Christ. To build up Your church for the advancement of the Gospel in the earth.

And You will do this, Lord, until the very day that the Lord Jesus Christ comes again to take His church and to end this world and to usher in eternity. Lord, blessed be Your name today. Bless this message to all of our hearts.

For the glory of Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen.

What a precious day. A special day. Jesus Christ shepherds His flock and uses men.

But what is our responsibility? Your responsibility? What's the church's responsibility? Brothers and sisters, I want to just briefly, very briefly, exhort you as members, as people in this gathering. How should you view this elder, Brother Brian? Those who have been here any length of time, you understand the commitment we have to these very truths, the very things Brother Mack is emphasizing. But from your side, right? There's the exchange between a shepherd and the flock and the flock to the shepherd.

It's quite a precious thing. Three quick things. Realize, dear brothers and sisters, Brian is one of the men, as a shepherd, to watch for your soul.

To watch for your soul. Hebrews 13, 17. Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account.

Watching for the souls of people. No governmental institution, no teacher or coach, nobody does that but shepherds. Watches for the souls.

Yes, as parents, you feel that as a dad, as a mother, but in God's Word and in the picture of this, his gathering and his flock, shepherds watch for your soul. We're talking big life and death things here, dear ones. Watching includes guarding you from harm, encouraging you in Christian growth, and admonishing you towards holy living.

It is a precious thing to be watched for. To have your soul watched for. Second, remember that in Brian's life, you're to follow his faith, his example, his life.

It's been beautiful, the testimonies during the sharing, even things that Mack alluded to. I can't even go there without getting emotional when I think about Brother Brian and Michelle. But whose faith you follow, as he follows Jesus Christ, you follow him.

What a thing. Hebrews 13, 7. Remember those which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow. As he grows in Jesus Christ, and he labors to be faithful, and he goes after Christ with his whole heart, follow him.

Learn from him. See things in his life that will shape you and help you minister deeply to you. Doesn't matter what age, where you are in the faith.

Learn to follow Brian and the shepherds as they exemplify or portray to you the way of following Jesus Christ. His life can be something you learn from weekly and monthly. What a precious thing.

Third, remember, saints, to esteem Brother Brian highly in love. This is one of the most incredible passages in the New Testament where Paul is speaking of how a flock, how sheep should look to the shepherd. This is not an organization of men.

We've already said that today. This is not what men build. This is what Jesus Christ builds and keeps and he shepherds his flock.

And therefore, it's precious. It is precious to be in his flock and to be shepherded by him with men laboring to please Christ. Esteem him highly in love.

Which means you don't just stand back with a critical spirit. You have love. You pray.

You do this for us. We know this. I'm not probably bringing anything out new today.

But I want to just exhort you and remind you how lofty and glorious these things are. 1 Thessalonians 5 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you. Know them.

Know their lives. And are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Remember Brian in prayer.

Remember his labor. Remember his care for you. Love him.

Esteem him. Speak highly of him. Lift him up in prayer considering the gift of Jesus Christ for your life, for your soul, for your good.

Amen. Church, take these things to heart. Love this man as he loves Christ and as you love Christ.

Love him. Love the labor of this dear man to love him for your soul, to watch for you. Amen.

Let me pray and then we'll call Brian to the front. Oh, Father, how great you are. The church of the living God set apart through the ages and men, just men, broken men who've been called by the Great One, Christ Jesus, set apart to love the flock and care for the flock, to give their lives.

What a thing, truly, as Lee opened, that you give. This is from you. You do it.

And we, as the flock, are privileged to have one another and to have shepherds, to have deacons, to have you in them. What a thing this is, Lord. We pray your gracious stirring in the flock today that all of us would receive this as from you, that not only would your Spirit mightily rest upon Brian, but upon all of us in this room, your assembly, your people.

Lord, magnify your glory in this day and in the coming days. Keep your flock. Magnify the glory of Jesus Christ, we ask through Brian, through this church.

Amen. We're going to conclude our service with the laying on of hands in prayer. I'm going to ask our elders and all our deacons and Brother Michael Durham to come and we will all pray, and then we will have our benediction.

Lord, we thank you for the movement of your Spirit. We thank you for how you've built this church, how you've given it leaders. Lord, we pray for Brian that the grace would be upon him, that you would give him mercy in his duties, wisdom in his discernments, all by truth, all by your love.

Lord, that the love of Christ, the glory of Christ, and the image of Christ would be projected to those around him. We pray, God, for your glory. We pray, Lord, for your movement.

We thank you for him. We pray, God, that in all things, that you would get all the preeminence, help he and Michelle and his family, help them to serve, help them to balance all the different tensions and responsibilities of being a father, a husband, and an elder. Father, we pray, God, you would speak to him through your word, by the grace of his lips, Lord, that he would draw people unto you.

And we thank you, Father, in Christ's name. Father, we do praise your name. What a day today has been.

All praise, honor, and glory is yours. Thank you for what you've done. Lord, thank you that you don't just leave him where he is today.

Father, you're going to lead him on. Father, we ask that you would give a special measure of your spirit to Brian today, and ongoing. We don't know what lies ahead, but, Father, you do.

I pray that you would work in a mighty way, in Christ's name. Holy and righteous Father, we acknowledge your presence among us right here. That you would set your hand upon your servant, anoint him for the task whereunto you've called him.

We thank you for this holy and sacred calling. We thank you for its privilege, but, oh Lord, what a burden it is. You've called us to do that which we are not capable.

And so we look upward. We look to thee, oh God. Now equip and enable this dear brother.

As you anointed your son for his ministry, as Ananias was sent to lay hands upon Paul and Timothy received the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Lord, our hands are empty, but they are your vessel. Lay your hand upon him now.

Fill him with the baptism and the power of the Spirit. Set upon him now, Lord, that which will equip him. Make him a prophet to his generation, a preacher of the Gospel, a pastor to your sheep.

Lord, all we do now is what we have heard and seen heaven do. You have ordained him, and now we lay hands upon him in acknowledgement of what you have done. To your glory, to your praise, to the edification and the building of this church in thy kingdom, now and forever.

Amen. Father, it says you give this man, and yet we give him back to you. We ask you, Lord, to have your great hand upon him, that truly his labor would be increasing because of the power and the nearness of God.

Lord, his heart, his life, his example, his faith would grow, that his love for these dear sheep would burn. Oh, Lord. To watch for their souls.

What a thing. Lord, give Brian that kind of heart. Give the sheep a heart to receive it.

Lord, teach us more of these things. Thank you for your great mercy. Our gracious God, our Lord Jesus, Lord, we do right now commission our brothers.

We lay our hands upon Him in full acknowledgement of Your good work, of what You are doing, of whom You have set apart. We're humbling ourselves before You and we're calling upon You now to equip Him, strengthen Him, enable Him by Your Spirit to do the work You've called Him to do. Thank You for His heart, which is Your gift.

Thank You for the strengths You've given Him. We pray that You would build them more and more. Not for Him, but for the blessing of this precious assembly, this flock of Christians and future Christians.

And Lord, as a protector against the wolves that may creep in. Enable our brother with strength from on high, with vision as an overseer, with perspective, with focus. Bless him.

Bless him, we pray. And bless his dear wife, Lord. Have Your good hand upon her as His help meet.

Lord, as His best friend and as His encourager. Strengthen her. Shield her.

Lord, protect her from the onslaughts that may come from the enemy. Lord, that she would herself have perspective and faith and strength from on high to walk alongside her husband. We love You.

We praise You. We commit our brother to You. And embrace him as a fellow elder today.

May it be a true blessing to this body in the precious name of the Lord Jesus, our King and Priest, and great Savior, we pray. Amen. Father, how great You are and how good You are.

You, Christ, who are the Author and Perfecter and Pioneer of our faith. Lord, we know that You don't do things just halfway. Lord, You have called this dear brother.

You will equip as well. Lord, we believe that. And it's according to Your Word, Lord, that You will impart spiritual gifts and graces, Lord.

So do it even now, Lord, we pray. Lord, this moment as we bring our dear brother before the church, before heaven, Lord, and we call upon Your great name to bless him and bless us at the same time, O Lord. You're able to do this.

There's nothing impossible for You, Lord. What may seem impossible with man is possible with You, Lord. So, let all doubt be removed in this place, Lord, and let Your great name be magnified.

Lord, bless this dear man, our brother Brian and his wife, Michelle. Lord, I pray that You would equip him, Lord, to lead not only his home, Lord, but this church, Lord. And to be a man that can be followed in the faith as he has been doing, Lord.

Keep him in the faith, in the most holy faith. Keep him away from evil, Lord. Keep him away from distractions, Lord.

Help his eyes be set on the Savior, on the Good Shepherd, and let him lead like Christ. We pray, Lord, be with him. We love You for what You are doing, Lord.

We love You for what You will do. We love You forever and ever, in Christ's name. Father, You have called our brother to an impossible task.

We can't do anything apart from Christ. And we know that Brian knows something of this. And we know that Brian's heart is that he might decrease so that Christ might increase.

And this is the very man that You've raised up. The one that You've called to an impossible task. The one that You will give and have given gifts and graces.

The one whom You will again and again fill with Your Holy Spirit. The one through whom You have committed Yourself to work. Lord, we thank You for such a gift.

I pray for my brother and sister that they would perpetually know their weakness so that the power of Christ would rest upon them. Lord, we want the power of Christ to rest upon them. We want them to be mighty in God.

So write this on their hearts. That Christ is all. That Christ's Gospel is the best news.

And that Christ as Captain can help them in every moment of need. I pray that You'd give him words. Words to proclaim.

Words in counseling. Words when he's across a lunch table from a brother. Words that are fitting and in season.

That again and again, You would prove Yourself faithful to this brother. As he opens his mouth to herald Christ. As he opens his mouth to counsel according to the Scriptures, that You would give him words.

That You would give him wisdom. Wisdom from above. That he'd think, I don't even know where that thought came from.

It was God that did it. That You would do this in and through him again and again and again. Lord, make him faithful.

Protect him from the schemes of the enemy. Make him to last in the ministry and not to grow weary in well-doing. Let him persevere even to the very end.

That he could fall in, weary as he may be, to the embrace of Jesus Christ. And hear those words, Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter in to the joy of your Master.

This is our desire for him. This is his desire for this body and every member of it. O Lord, be glorified.

Build Your church. Bless our brother. In Jesus' name.

Father, we ask You this day officially, powerfully, in new ways, to launch our church into more fruitfulness as a result of this day. We pray that You would do things we've not thought about or asked for as a result of today. We pray for Brian and Michelle that You would just put things in high gear spiritually.

That didn't mean busyness. It means depth. It means new realms of walking with You, being used by You.

Lord, for Michelle, we pray that You would, as she has excelled as a deacon's wife, we pray that she would more excel as a pastor's wife. Give her new grace for all that they will face. Make her, Lord, a deeper and a better and a more wonderful helpmate to her husband who is now a gift of a shepherd to this church.

Give her gifts and graces. And Lord, for Brian, we believe in this time of prayer right now as the church prays, we believe that You have and You are giving him gifts and new measure of the Holy Spirit. That his ministry would bear much fruit to the glory and honor of Jesus Christ.

Thank You, Lord. As a church, we rejoice in what God has done. And we rejoice in what You're doing.

Blessed be Your holy name, O Lord. And all of God's people said, Amen. I want you to stand for our benediction and receive it from the Lord.

May the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And I pray your whole spirit and soul and body will be preserved blameless under the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you who also will do it.

You are dismissed. God bless you.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Zvgyd27y7C0.mp4>

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