

# (Church Leadership) 4. Compassion and Calling

by Zac Poonen

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*Being called by God is a tremendous privilege that requires humility, gentleness, compassion, and a willingness to submit to His will.*

**Duration:** 58:29

**Scripture:** Exodus 3:1, Isaiah 49:10

**Topics:** "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Humility"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being called by God to be a leader or elder in the church. He shares a story about Moses, who was chosen by God to shepherd the people of Israel because of his compassion for a thirsty lamb. The speaker highlights that God is the only one we have to answer to and that His calling must be on us at all times. He also emphasizes the need for leaders to learn from Jesus how to be gentle and humble, especially when dealing with ignorant and misguided people. The sermon references Hebrews 5:1-6 to support the idea that leaders must have the qualification of dealing gently with others.

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## Transcript

I want to share a few thoughts about being called by God. I am not talking about full time Christian work. Because I am talking about being an elder.

It says in Acts chapter 20, Paul told the elders in Ephesus. Paul told the elders in Ephesus. Acts 20 verse 28.

Be on guard for yourself and for the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. Be on guard for yourself and for the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. First of all, I want to say that it is a tremendous privilege to serve God in any capacity in this church.

First of all, I want to say that it is a tremendous privilege to serve God in any capacity in this church. Because it says here, the church is something which he has purchased with his own blood. See, we have delivery boys in different offices.

See, we have delivery boys in different offices. A bank may send Christmas greeting cards. A bank may send Christmas greeting cards.

They may send very expensive equipment to some other company worth millions of rupees. They won't send that delivery boy whom they use for distributing the cards. The more expensive the equipment, the more higher person is sent from the company.

The more expensive the equipment, the more higher person is sent from the company. India is a government. Boeing is from India.

Boeing has sent many Boeing aircrafts from a company. Boeing has sent many Boeing aircrafts from a company. Because the cost of all those planes is some billions of rupees.

Because the cost of all those planes is some billions of rupees. I mean, 50 Boeing planes may cost millions and billions of rupees. I mean, 50 Boeing planes may cost millions and billions of rupees.

Ok, now think of a church which is purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. Ok, now think of a church which is purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. So, he says, this church, Paul tells the elders in Ephesus, So, he says, this church, Paul tells the elders in Ephesus, the Holy Spirit made you to look after this church.

the Holy Spirit made you to look after this church. but you have to take and deliver somewhere else. One day you have to deliver this church to Jesus Christ.

The Lord, this is the church I looked after for so many years. Here it is. How careful we need to be.

You can't do it if God hasn't called you. Now we can ask these elders, how did you, how did God call you? Did he speak from heaven saying you are to be in charge of this church? No, it says in Acts chapter 14, that the apostles appointed elders, verse 23, in every church. And they prayed for them with fasting, and then commended them to the Lord.

And they didn't just choose anybody they liked. They appointed certain people. And they said, well, we believe God has appointed you.

Because that apostle was a representative of God. It's like the ambassador of America speaks for America when he's in India. The president of America doesn't have to come here and speak.

So Paul appointed these fellows, these people as elders and said, God's appointed you. There are some cases where Paul may have made mistakes. And some people may have backslidden and fallen away from eldership also.

That happens even today. Because some of those elders, he tells them that after I go, I know what's going to happen to you. Verse 30, some of you will start drawing away disciples after yourself.

Were these people appointed by God? Maybe, perhaps. But they backslid from their calling. Was Judas Iscariot actually called by Jesus after Jesus spent a whole day in fasting and prayer? All night? From those 70 people, did Jesus say, OK, Judas, come? He was not a deceiver at that time.

He was as wholehearted and sincere and humble as Peter. But he became a deceiver. Many people can't accept that.

They think God chose him beforehand to betray Jesus. Then, that is an insult to God to say that he wanted somebody to betray Jesus, so he chose somebody whom he's going to send to hell finally. When God chooses a person, he chooses a person according to what he is today, not what he will be five years from now.

You know some of the elders in some of our churches who have left us and fallen away and gone into other things today? I know them better than you. And a number of them. I am absolutely sure that there was no mistake.

God chose them to be elders. But they fell away from that calling. Just like these elders.

In fact, the same church, this is in Ephesus, you read in Acts 20.17. He is speaking to the elders in Ephesus. And to one of these people only, later on, a few years later, John writes in Acts chapter 2, you have left your first love. And I am going to remove you from your position.

Was it because Paul made a mistake or God made a mistake? No. They fell away from their position. They did not live according to their calling.

So, the fact that somebody falls away doesn't mean God never called them. Who was the first king of Israel? Saul. Was he specifically called by God? Or did Samuel choose him? No.

God told Samuel, tomorrow one young man will come and that's the man I have chosen from all of Israel. He is the one I have chosen to be king. And then, he was such a humble man the day he was selected.

They appointed a day for him to be crowned as king. And they couldn't find him. Would you do that? If one day we say, OK, we are going to ordain you as an elder, will you disappear? There are people waiting in queue to be elders.

And Saul said, no, no, no, I am not fit to be king. And it says they found him hiding behind the suitcases somewhere, in between all the suitcases. He thought, nobody will look for me here.

He wasn't hiding, pretending to be humble. No, no, no, brother, I am not. And OK, if you want, I will accept it.

Not like that. No, it's none of that false humility. He was absolutely convinced, I am not fit to be the king.

And he hid behind the suitcases, underneath. God said, he is over there, pull him out. In two or three years, he became a different person.

It can happen to people whom God calls. It can happen to people who start out very humble. I have seen it happen before my eyes.

You have heard me say many times, the easiest thing in the world is for God to bless your ministry. It is the easiest thing. And the most difficult thing is for God to keep you humble after he has blessed your ministry.

And pride is such a thing that we don't even recognize. You know, there are certain things from us, sometimes we don't recognize. We have to humble ourselves and acknowledge, I don't recognize it.

You know, for example, as you grow older and older, your body begins to decay. One of the problems that happens is, your breath becomes not too good. Because decay is there in your teeth and gums and all that, which is not there in a young person.

But this person from whom the bad breath is coming, he doesn't smell it himself. It can happen to all of us. Even if you brush your teeth, it can happen.

But you don't know it yourself. Until someone is kind enough to tell you, you probably need to wash your mouth out with some antibacterial liquid or something. We don't know it.

But it comes forth. There are things worse than that, which come forth from us without our knowing it. One of them is pride.

Many of us may not realize that others sense the pride in you. And God, God senses it much more. But I find that there is a very helpful test by which I can find out.

No, like I have, supposing, some type of testing machine to check whether my breath is fresh or not. If there was something like that, I could check it frequently and say, hey, I need to do something about it. But there is such a thing in the Christian life, that if you are proud, you don't get grace.

And when you don't get grace, you lose your victory over sin. Why do you think you suddenly lost your temper that day in the office? I'll tell you. You didn't get grace.

That's all. Why didn't you get grace? Because God smelt a pride in you. You who had so much self-control in your home, why you got upset with your wife that day all of a sudden? And nobody in the assembly saw it or heard it.

Do you recognize that is like a test to show, no, there is pride there. What does it matter whether people in the church saw it or not? Why is it in that particular situation, you got so irritated with somebody? Or in some other situation, you lusted with your eye. Or in that other situation, you grabbed the opportunity to get some money.

And you sacrificed some principle in order to get it. How did that happen? And how you found yourself having a great delight in getting that money? You didn't cheat anybody. But there was such a love for that.

It's because you lost grace. But you know, most people, they never acknowledge it. It's like ten people coming and telling you, brother, your breath is bad.

No, no, no. You say, no, you're wrong. You're all wrong.

Imagine almighty God himself saying you're proud and you say, no, no, no, I'm not proud. You say, God never told me I was proud. Yes, he did, by not giving you grace in that particular situation to overcome sin.

When you fell into sin in that situation, it was God shouting at you, hey, listen, there's a smell coming out of you, it's pride. You can shut your ears and say, no, no, no, I didn't hear anything. If you want to live like that, you can live.

But grace will not be there. So it's good to acknowledge. Lord, because if you continue like that, the danger is not that you'll lose your eldership.

That is this much important, so small. Long before you lose your eldership, God has given up on you. God rejected Saul and he sat on the throne for 30 years after that.

Because he refused to move. He said, I'm the king here. There are elders who sit like that and say, I'm the king here.

You can sit. God is not with you. So, the most important thing is that God is with us.

So, this matter of being called by God. See, it says in Hebrews, in chapter 5, Hebrews 5, this is a wonderful passage in verses 1 to 6. In fact, the whole chapter. It's about the calling of Jesus Christ to be our high priest.

It says, listen to this explanation of the Holy Spirit. Every high priest taken from men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God. He is a representative of men before God.

Okay. And if he is to be a representative of men, it's one very important qualification to be a leader of men, to be the man between men and God. Here it is.

Verse 2. He has to learn how to deal gently with the ignorant and the misguided. If a person cannot deal gently with ignorant, misguided people, he is not fit to be a leader. I mean, if you can look at people in your church, and these are all shipped with half-hearted people.

What you say may be absolutely right. But it's also absolutely right that you are not fit to be their leader. This is the trouble with a lot of leaders.

Because they don't realize that they themselves are also beset with weaknesses, it says in this verse. They don't realize that they also are made of the same stuff. If you don't recognize that you are made of the same stuff as those people, maybe their sins are more obvious and yours are secretly done at home.

But it's the same thing. God sees the whole thing. It is the recognition of our own weakness that makes us very gentle with other people.

I remember the days when I was very hard with people. Why? Because I didn't recognize my own weakness. But the closer you come to God, the more you recognize your weakness.

And the holier you become, the more gentle you become with other people. A lot of elders are very hard. And they think that they are following Jesus who drove the money changers out of the temple.

But their Jesus is another Jesus who every day has got a whip. In the Bible we read he used it only two days in three and a half years. These people use it two days every week.

That's not Jesus. That is another Jesus. So, we can justify everything we do by saying that's what Jesus also did.

But you are one billion miles away from Jesus. But you can quote one instance that he did it once, I do it every day. To be gently with the misguided and the ignorant because he himself has got the same weakness.

I want to show you a couple of verses. Isaiah 49, the last part of verse 10. He who has compassion on them will lead them.

Who can lead God's people? Those who have compassion on them. So many times you read about Jesus. He looked at the people and he had compassion.

He was fit to lead. When you can look at God's people in your church, ignorant, misguided, doing so many things wrong, they come late to the meetings. You told them ten times to do something, they don't do it.

And you can have compassion. You are fit to be a leader. But you are irritated.

You need to sit in that congregation and get saved yourself. Yeah, it's a very important qualification. Jesus said, learn from me, Matthew 11, 29.

What did he tell us to learn from him? Many things we can learn from him. As I told you, we can learn from Jesus how to be a preacher. We can learn from Jesus how to submit to parents when we are young.

But none of these things he said. He didn't even tell us to learn from him how to pray. The disciples asked him to teach them that, but he didn't tell them, learn from me how to pray.

But he did say, learn from me how to be gentle and how to be humble. And those are the two things which all Christians need the most. Which all elders need the most.

And the only person you can learn it from is Jesus. But they don't learn it from him. The Jews have a tradition or a story from their traditions.

It's not in the Bible. But it's a very beautiful story. One or two Jewish stories are very beautiful.

And one of these stories is like this. Moses was in the wilderness for 40 years shepherding the flock of Jethro. And he was caring for the sheep.

And one day he saw one little lamb going beside the river and drinking water from there. I mean the sheep was going here and this poor little lamb had gone all the way to the river. That was a little distance.

So when Moses was looking after his sheep, he suddenly saw one sheep little lamb over there. He ran, picked up that lamb. Oh, he said, if I knew that you were thirsty, I would have carried you here.

And a voice from heaven said, truly you are fit to shepherd Israel. It's such a beautiful story that I like to believe it's true. Because that is so true to the heart of God.

That where he sees a man having tremendous compassion for people who have fallen, for the ignorant and the misguided, heaven says, truly you are fit to be an elder. So that's a very important qualification. But it goes on to say in Hebrews, Hebrews in chapter 5, that verse 4, that even if he's got all these qualifications, still he can't become.

No one verse 4, no one can take this honor to himself unless God calls him. So, first of all, you have to have this very gentle attitude towards the flock. And some of you who are young brothers, I mean, maybe 10 years before God ever gives you a responsibility anywhere in any church.

But we've encouraged you to come along so that you can be prepared for it. It takes 10 years to be prepared. But you've got to learn gentleness in these 10 years.

And then, even then you're not ready. God has to call you. And then it says, even Jesus did not become high priest.

God said, you're the high priest. See, verse 5, Jesus did not glorify himself to be a high priest. But verse 6, as God told him, you are a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Then he took that responsibility. It's a very serious thing to take any responsibility in the church. I'll tell you honestly, I would never dare to do the type of job I'm doing if God hadn't called me.

God knows and I know that I had zero interest in doing what I'm doing. In relation to our churches. Because you just can't do it unless God calls you.

He won't give you grace for it. He won't give you the wisdom for it. I wouldn't dare to preach if God hadn't called me to preach.

I have seen thousands of people get up into pulpits. It's so obvious when you listen to them after 10 minutes that God hasn't called them. And I listen to them and I say, Lord, don't add me to that number.

I have no interest in preaching to a single soul in the world if God doesn't call me. I'd rather sit quietly and keep my mouth shut. You can still be a disciple.

You don't have to be a preacher in order to be a disciple. All are to be disciples. But among them some are called to be elders, to teach, to preach.

You need to have compassion. I remember once I was in England speaking in a meeting and one of those young Englishmen came to me. It was a charismatic group, you know.

There are some charismatic, not some, many charismatic groups where there are people going around stirring people to become healers and prophets and all types of things. When they come to CFC, we tell them to clean the toilets first. You do that for about 10 years and we'll see what you can do next.

But they go there, within one day they are going to make you a prophet or a healer or something like that. And that poor fellow believes it. So one of these chaps came to me and he said, Brother Zach, I think God is calling me to a healing ministry.

I've met so many stupid young people like that, but I'm not so hopeful. Okay, I don't want to despise it. So I told him, I said, if you want to have a healing ministry, you better start with compassion first.

Because Jesus had such tremendous compassion on people. So any ministry, we got to have compassion for people. Jesus saw the people as nobody to teach them.

As sheep going astray. And he had compassion on them and he taught them. He had compassion on them and he healed them.

He had compassion on them and he multiplied the loaves and fed them. His whole ministry arose out of compassion. From heaven he looked down on the earth and he had compassion and came here.

There is no other way to have a ministry. And then on top of that, God has to call you. The trouble today in Christendom is we have leaders and elders who don't have compassion and God hasn't called them either.

Some are out to make money or earn a living. I don't think we have people like that in our midst. In our midst, the danger may be more seeking honor.

Seeking honor is no different from trying to receive a salary. See, you may say, I don't get a salary. I don't stretch out my hand to the church to give me money.

But you do stretch out your hand to get honor. What's the difference? Your salary is honor. That's worse than getting money.

So we got to not think that we are free from it. God has to call you. And one mark, I've often said, one mark of a man called to be an elder is that he has no desire to be an elder.

Saul was really qualified to be king at the beginning because he had no desire to be a king. But when he lost the anointing and after God rejected Saul, God brought David to birth as a baby. You know, God created David only after he rejected Saul.

You say, where is that in the Bible? Good question. How many years did Saul reign? 40 years. How old was David when he became king? No, David.

30. Was he born when Saul became king? And it says here, after two years Saul was rejected. That's also in Samuel.

We discover a lot of things when we study scripture carefully. After Saul was rejected, God gave him another chance. Then David came to birth.

And then, of course, God had to wait till David was 30 years old. So he said, okay, let Saul sit there. But he anointed David when he was probably 19 or 20.

And Saul recognized it. This anointing has gone from me. It has gone on this young brother in my church.

Everybody wants to listen to him. But I am the senior elder. I have been sitting here for 10 years.

Brother Zach only appointed me as the elder here. So we are not going to allow any of these young fellows to come up. That's what Saul said.

Samuel only appointed me. I didn't come here on my own. So what? The anointing has gone.

It has gone on another young brother. If you don't want to be like Saul, humble yourself and recognize it. Don't take spears to throw it at him and finish him off.

It has happened. Not in CSI, in our churches. Not real spears.

We will get caught by the police if we use real spears. There are many spears people can use. Search your heart.

God has to call you. And you have to live in that calling. And every year you are tested.

You have to work hard, keep at it, keep at it, keep at it. You have got to humble yourself all the time. God blesses you.

You humble yourself. He blesses you some more. You go down some more before God.

You judge yourself constantly. You have no desire for position. You don't want any salary called honor.

No. Means you are serving freely. You don't even want a salary called position or recognition.

No, no salary at all. Just love for Jesus. And then you see some other young brother coming up like David. Praise God. This is what I was praying for. I am getting old now.

I am about 40 years old. Getting old. But here is this wonderful young brother, 20 year old coming up. I see an anointing in his words. Great. I have got to groom him.

And protect him from pride of course. Don't push him up too quickly. Encourage him.

Don't compete with him. Don't try to suppress him. Gradually over a period of time, pull back and let him go forward.

What a different end it would have been for Saul if he had recognized the anointing of God upon David. It's the calling of God, brother. And if that's gone from our life, it's no use fighting against God.

I don't remove anybody from Eldership. Samuel was not the one who removed Saul. Definitely not. He prayed for him. He prayed for him. Till one day God said, stop it.

Stop praying for him. God has told me to stop praying for certain people. I don't waste my time.

And God says no. He said no. There are some people who are legalistic who say, no, no, no, we must pray for our enemies.

Go ahead. Go ahead. You live according to the old covenant.

You can do whatever you like. But there are some people whom God has just rejected. That doesn't mean they have given up their throne yet.

They must sit on their throne for a long time. Some of the brothers who have fallen away from our churches as elders, quite some time before they fell, I sensed something is missing now. I didn't do anything.

I said God is the one who appoints. God is the one who puts down. So I'm not going to put anybody up.

I'm not going to put anybody down. And God allows some small thing to happen and he gets exposed. I can tell you so many stories about this.

The thing on which they stumbled is such a small stone. It's not a big rock or something. Small thing.

God says I do it. There is a verse like that. Ezekiel.

In chapter three. Ezekiel chapter three. Verse twenty.

When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and I almighty God place a small obstacle before him, he will die. See who puts that obstacle? Not Ezekiel. Ezekiel is a prophet but he doesn't go around putting obstacles in front of people.

But God sees this fellow is becoming proud. And he thinks because he has got a good relationship with Ezekiel, he is quite comfortable. But God says I see something in his life which Ezekiel cannot see.

And I'm going to put a small obstacle in front of him and he will stumble on that. He was a righteous man. He did a lot of good things.

But he turned away from that. And he became proud. And he loved his position.

So who puts that obstacle? I've seen this happen more than once. God's calling is an amazing thing. There is a lovely expression in Hebrews four.

It's a very beautiful expression. God is called in verse thirteen by this title. Him with whom we have to do.

He is the only person with whom we have to do. That's like saying I have only one boss in my office. The whole company may think whatever they like of me but I've got one boss and what he thinks of me is the only thing that matters.

His calling has to be on me all the time. And in order for that calling to remain, first of all he has to go to call me. I must have a sense.

God has called me for this responsibility. I don't want to do it. God has given it to me.

I don't want a salary of honor. I don't want a salary of money. I don't want a salary of position.

But if God calls me for something, I'll do it. You know it's like Mary said to Gabriel. I mean what was the reaction when Gabriel said the son of God is going to come into your womb.

That's the most fantastic promise for fifteen hundred years. Every woman in Israel was waiting for that. One person is only going to be chosen.

One seed of one woman. And for hundreds of years every Jewish woman is hoping will I be the one, will I be the one, will I be the one. And then one day Gabriel comes to this young nineteen year old girl and said you're the one.

What does she say? I thought so. I always had that sort of feeling that I would be the one. You know I sort of had a sense in my spirit that God was calling me for this.

And I knew it was just a matter of time before you would come. And of course I'm ready. Sure here I am.

Of course I'm quite unworthy to be an elder or anything but I'm ready. Her reaction was so different. Who am I? The Lord has had mercy on his maidservant.

What does she say there? His mercy has flowed upon me. Luke chapter 1 verse 52. He has brought down rulers from their thrones and exalted those who were humble.

You know Mary said that before Peter did. And she takes such a low position. I'm the Lord's maid, I'm just the Lord's bond slave and verse 38 if that is to be done, let it be done.

And she didn't go around talking about it. That is the right response to a call from God. And you see her humility right through her life.

She never wanted any position as the mother of Jesus. One day she just wanted to talk to him and Jesus said who is my mother, these brothers and sisters. These will hear the word of God.

She didn't get offended. In Cana when he said woman what have I got to do with you? She didn't get offended. The type of person God calls is like that.

Have you thought of Mary delivering inside a cattle shed? We have some of the filthiest slums here in Bangalore. I'm sure the poorest person in that filthiest slum never delivered a child in a cattle shed with donkeys and cows. I don't believe in the history of the world any woman delivered a child in the midst of cattle.

It's the only place they got. And Mary didn't complain. Can you imagine if Jesus was born into the midst of this complaining atmosphere.

If Mary had been telling Joseph I told you you should have started out earlier. You keep on with your carpentry shop some order is not completed and we are late now. Long ago the Caesar passed the order you could have sent some information to your relatives in Bethlehem at least to book a room for us.

In the midst of this conflict between husband and wife Jesus is born. God would never have selected a woman like that. He selected a woman he said okay cattle shed cattle shed it's fine.

It doesn't matter I'm a nobody in any case. It's a great honor to be the mother of the son of God. I believe God from thousands of years planned there should be no room in the inn.

The donkey must go a little slowly. Joseph is wondering why is donkey is particularly slow on this trip. It's planned thousands of years earlier Joseph.

So that when you reach Bethlehem every room will be booked. Because this is no ordinary person being born. This is the son of God.

He has come to save the world. And so he has to come underneath everybody to save them. He has to be born where no other child is ever born.

Because he has to come underneath them to lift them all up. That's leadership to go underneath others. Mary must have some type of grace from God.

Definitely otherwise no woman could do it. And that's how God chose her. She remained humble right till the end.

You read that she was with the 120 praying for the Holy Spirit. She is 50 years old or 55 mother of Jesus. And this young 33 year old Peter is going to be the leader.

She humbled himself. No claiming position. You know who I am? And you never read of her in the Acts of the Apostles after that.

That's the type of person God calls. To bring forth the body of Jesus through her womb. And to bring forth the body of Christ today in the 21st century.

Be one like that. And he will bring forth the body of Christ through you in place after place after place. Remain humble brother.

Let's pray.

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