

## **2025-03-09 - Why Care about Presbytery - Shawn Mathis (31025339584510) SermonOnly**

Let us turn to our Bibles to 1st Timothy chapter 4. 1st Timothy chapter 4 verse 14. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the eldership.

Let us pray. Gracious God above, as we go and drill into these verses here, Lord, and we see the description that Paul gives to Timothy that he did not anoint himself, and that he was under not just a body of a bunch of elders, but a presbytery. Gracious God.

And the implications of that for the Christian walk, Lord, as you are the King and Lord of the church, and that we are therefore to follow what you have given us in your word with respect to the organization of the church. Our God and Savior, if indeed we are familiar with these things, may they be reinforced upon our soul. If they are new to us, God, may it help us to contemplate and meditate upon the truth of why we have a presbytery and its usefulness and its function in the life of the Christian, we pray.

Amen. As I'm preaching through the 1st Timothy and then 2nd Timothy and Titus, I knew it would involve a number of practical topics from male and female roles, we saw in chapter 2 a little bit, to what a pastor should be doing, and even how to take care of the family we'll see later on in Timothy. Now the topic of church government comes up.

Many Christians have been told it makes no difference how the church is organized, that one type of church government is as good as another. That's, I think, a pretty standard understanding in the American scene, although in my experience at times they'll say that, but in practice they don't act that way. Others do think that the Bible has something to say about the matter of organizing the body of Christ, but they think it's left up to each individual church, and even more I suspect think the New Testament has no church government to speak of, that apparently the apostles existed and that's the only significant fact that matters, kind of.

But as we read in these verses, this verse, and clearly there is a church government in the New Testament, somebody did the anointing, Timothy did not designate himself the public office of pastor, and we can explain it this way, this topic of church government. There are some Christians who are set aside for work in a public ministry. Now you think that wouldn't be controversial, but it was already controversial back in the 1600s with the Quakers and the like, who are arguing there are no such thing as a pastor, when we literally read chapter three of first Timothy, where he describes the bishop, pastor, minister, and his functions in the body of Christ.

There's clearly somebody who's set aside publicly to do these things. I think, short of the Quakers, we can all agree to this. The apostles are another example, of course.

These are men who are given responsibilities the rest of us don't have, and the qualifications they're in. They have this office, there is an office, and more than one office, that's a another sermon. And so once we accept these facts, there's a group of people, men

in particular, who are set aside for public work, something different the rest of us don't have, they have a laying on of hands in particular, then the question becomes, what are those responsibilities in particular, and what is their relationship to the church? Right? When we can clearly see there's pastors and apostles and deacons and ruling elders and people running around doing these things, making these decisions, something's going on here in the New Testament.

And that's what we're going to talk about. Some teach that the relationship of these church leaders to these various churches is one of independency, on the one hand, on the other hand, episcopacy, it's called. Is my battery going? It's gone! This thing's terrible, I can't, I can't, nope, it's attached to me.

So once we accept the fact that there are men, or church officers is the word we would use, something that they can do publicly that you can't, something special, they have qualifications, like we saw in chapter 3, for example, or the deacons, they're in chapter 3 as well. Then the question is, what is their relationship to the church and the church to them? And part of that question is answered in this verse, and historically has been answered in one of three ways, broadly conceived, on the one hand, independency, on the other hand, episcopacy, we will call it. In independency, each church and its leadership is ecclesiastically, that is church-wise, separate in every way from other churches.

They are the final court of appeal. The only way you can appeal beyond the local church and the independency is basically leave that church and there's nothing you can do if that church needs help, except maybe plea to someone else if they feel like helping you. In episcopacy, the churches are interconnected, so they're not independent on their own, but in a hierarchical fashion, such that the man or a group of men at the top is where the buck stops, and so you have that in Episcopal church, you have that in the Roman Catholic church as well, for example.

In Presbyterianism, we are both connected as churches, but not under a hierarchy in the sense of episcopacy. The parallel to politics, in my mind, is quite striking. If you understand the difference between democracy on the one hand and aristocracy on the other, and I say I believe in republic in the middle, I think you'll see the difference there, ecclesiastically.

In fact, that was the early arguments of Hodge and Thornwell and the like in the early 1800s. They made that strong parallel passage of the American Republican system. Now, this topic, of course, can be heavy in the details, and there's a number of things that could be said on it, but I think this one verse in particular helps explain our position as Presbyterians.

In this verse, we have something beyond a local church, I will argue, thus not independency, yet it is something less than a national church or a denomination. It's what we call a presbytery, or a regional collection of leaders and their churches. So let's look here into this.

## **What Is a Presbytery?**

What is a presbytery, is the first point. First, why church government at all? Why is it important? What's the significance? It should be enough because Christ said so. Christ is king over all, for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be

upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

He is a king over his people, and as a king, there's already an organized structure of the body of Christ, even if we don't think of it that way. Now, I want to remind us here, like I said, there's a lot of moving parts, that the church can be seen in two different ways, and they both are true and real. The church organic, that is, we are Christians, we are part of the body of Christ, even if we don't meet on Sunday.

It could be a war-torn country, and you lose all the pastors, you can't meet on Sunday, but you're still the body of Christ, you're still the church, we say. The church organic, and we have that relationship even with non-presbyterian churches. We call them brothers in the Lord and sisters, and we have fellowship with them, right? But there's also the church organized, a public organization, the public facing part of the church, and an official capacity in the name of the church, but more precisely, in the name of Christ, and that's what we're talking about here, the church organized, not the church organic, and church organized is already organized as a kingdom.

It's called the kingdom of God, and Christ is the head of that body. Matthew 28 in particular, we read, right, the great commission, verse 18, and Jesus came and spoke to them, that is, the disciples, the apostles, the second tier of the church leadership, because Christ is the top tier, right? All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth, and on that basis of his authority, he has organized his church and said, I'm going to pick 12 apostles. You can't pick 12 apostles.

Why? Because you're not king of the church, and I think talking to our brothers and sisters who don't have a very good grasp of church government, and I'm not saying Baptists or Independents necessarily, because they can have a good grasp, although we have a disagreement, they're like, we believe in it. There's a lot of Americans who simply don't believe in it, just wander about forth, they don't, what's a church, what's a pastor, whatever, some guy who's very popular, I like him, and I think one way to help them is, there is an apostle. Who picked the apostle? Can you pick an apostle? You think you can run around and just choose whatever apostle? No, Christ did it.

As the king, as he says here, I'm the authority, and I'm talking to you as my representatives. Remember, apostle means one sent forth. He represents, they represent Christ Jesus.

Therefore, I've been given this authority, and Christ, of course, gives them the great commission, and through them to the church. The Bible says so elsewhere, if Christ gave you a gift, and indeed he has many gifts, I don't think you'd turn on the way, right? Nah, I don't need any more Jesus, I'm full. I don't need any more blessings from you.

But we read Christ giving us many gifts, and we should receive those gifts. In Ephesians 4.8, we read that church officers are a gift from God. Therefore, he says, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

So, it's a picture of the triumphant king ascending into heaven, and out of his victory of combat over sin and death, is blessing his people with all these wonderful gifts. And he

himself, that is Christ, gave some to be apostles, some prophets, evangelists, and pastors, and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and the like. It's tied to this prior verse 8 and 9. He gave gifts to men.

In particular, he gave church officers. Men set aside publicly. And how important, therefore, is obedience to us? Do we teach our children that? Of course, we do.

Do you expect others to obey the government? Of course, we do. The HOA, the ordinance says, yes. What about the church? And we ran across this earlier in 1 Timothy 3.15. I'll read that in a bit.

Hebrews 13.17, however, tells us it's not just a democracy, the church government, where everybody just runs around and kind of does their own thing, and there's no leadership to speak of. We vote on everything. We decide on everything by majority rule.

It used to be called mob rule. But rather, we have rulers and the ruled in the church. People don't want to hear that language.

I know. Maybe you want to use something else. That's fine, as long as you're clear.

You're talking to those people, your friends that disagree with you. Hebrews 13.17 is a good verse. Obey those who rule over you.

He's not talking about the HOA, I'll tell you that. Obey those who rule over you. And be submissive.

So he's emphatic here. For they watch out for your souls. The church is about the soul work.

That's what makes us stand out as a public institution. Although it has things in common with natural institutions, as we say, we summarize in our confession, right? Chapter 1, that common things in society and the like, we do the same thing. A lot of overlap and natural law.

But in this specific matter, that's the heart of the church, is the matter of the soul. Between them and God, of course, and God uses the church to help us therein. For they watch out for your souls as those who must give account.

Not you, they, these people you submit to in the church. There's obviously a difference. These are people called church officers.

So here again, these verses show us this is a real thing. So we're starting, in other words, very generally, and we're working down to the details of what this church officer, these church officers are, their responsibilities, and how they relate to the church. And then lastly here, 1st Timothy 3.15, 1st Timothy 3.15, covered that a few sermons back.

I write, Paul writes here, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God. How should you do things in the house of God and his kingdom? And I'm telling you what to do here. And I'll jump ahead already.

You got to lay hands on these guys. They ought to be set aside by a group called a presbytery. That's the Greek word.

Of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The church, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Not in an absolute sense, of course, but in a relative sense, in a ministerial sense.

Not in a magisterial, as they used to talk, Luther and them, that we don't make laws, but we administer laws given to us. And so the church is a pillar and foundation in an administrative sense. And one question that comes up, another way of looking at this whole topic is, how do you organize a church? They have to have it organized.

People know there's a church and they go to this church, this guy's preaching and whatnot. There's an order in the church, there's a place they meet, and there's certain assumptions. Where did all this come from? Do you organize it like a family? Do you organize it like a business? Well, you organize it in accordance to the word of God, is what we would argue.

And so we've established that there is a church government, there are leaders, and therefore a government, and that Christ and the Bible care about these things. So the question then is, as we go into more details, what form does this government look like? And this is where we have many disagreements with our brothers in the Lord. And so I'm going to offer us a definition of presbytery, and work from there to show you that this definition is found in the word of God.

Definition comes from our book of church order. It is a governing body of ministers and ruling elders, so I'll just say church officers, which the sermon will be longer if I cut more detail. A governing body of church officers of a regional collection of churches.

Okay? A governing body of church officers of a regional collection of churches. 1 Timothy 4.14 is the go-to passage here. The origin of the word, as we'll see in the KJV and some of the older translations, neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Of the presbytery. And I don't like going with the Greek and the Hebrew often, obviously, but unfortunately I'm forced to do this in this case. You can hear the word presbyter.

Right? Presbyter. Not presbytery with a Y. Presbyter. It comes straight out of the Greek.

The word we would use is a transliteration of the Greek. Right? Trying to find the English equivalent to each letter. There it is.

Presbyter. All right. What's that? It just means an old man.

Now, of course, it doesn't mean an old man in his function. That's the root of it, but it means in practice over and over again. It's used for the Jewish church.

It's used for the Christian church to mean a leader, right? A ruling elder or elder of some sort. We use the word elder today. Capital E meaning a church officer.

And of course, it makes sense that they're usually elderly. They're older than a young guy, because they've got the experience. And that's how God ordinarily works, is he grants people gifts to be leaders.

And that granting of the gifts comes through ordinary providence. They've got life experience. Right? They've got a lot of it.

So they're the elders. The elders of the church. And I think a lot of us, again, those who are friends and the like, because I think most of us are probably convinced of these things, but if you're not, please bear with me.

To help them. Look, this is all we're saying. Presbyter is an old man.

Presbyters with an S, you can hear, means many old men or many elders. More precisely, right? Many elders. And you hear the R, you hear the S. And in English, you're like, it's two different things.

One's the singular, one's the plural. Exactly. This word here is not a plural of presbyter.

It's not presbyter as plural. It's a completely different kind of word, but it's the same root word. It's presbytery.

I'm not going to give you the Greek that way, but you can hear even in English, presbytery, the same with the Greek. It's a different ending, because it means something more than just a plurality of elders. Because it's not a plural of the word presbyter.

It's simply not. Then what is it, pastor? What's this word? And why do they translate it? You already know the answer, I think, many of you from last week. Eldership.

Because a Baptist put the money up for the translation, the NKJV, Dr. Cobb has explained to me. And they don't believe in a presbytery. They believe in local church independency only.

So that unfortunately influenced it. But don't despair about the NKJV, because you can see the word eldership in the English is not the same thing as elders with an S, is it? See that? They also recognize it's not just a bunch of elders put together. Something else is going on here.

It's a regional collection of leaders. So that's the point here from the text. Governing to rule relevant to the authority of the church.

And governing implies, of course, formal officers. And we already established that there are church officers, and we're supposed to even submit to them, Hebrews 13, 17. And they are set apart, and the like.

We'll talk a little bit about that in a bit. Regional church, meaning a collection of local churches, as opposed to all the churches in the world, all the churches in the nation, or one singular church. It's called the presbytery collection of churches, something in the middle there.

And so we must prove that there is in the Bible a regional collection of churches. Already half the work here is done, insofar as there are church officers. They're a governing body, is what I'm going to argue after this.

But part of that definition I gave for presbytery, governing leadership of a regional collection of churches, I'm going to argue for regional collection of churches now. Otherwise it wouldn't make sense. So here we go.

That there is one universal church organizationally in the New Testament. I'm coming about it a different direction. The way I was taught was you start out with a local church, and you try to argue for a regional collection of churches, then a national church.

I'm going to argue the status quo in the New Testament was there's one organized church. You see the difference? And then from there, you can argue, well, there must be local churches. Of course there's local churches.

You run across a lot of that here. So, 1 Corinthians 12, 12 and following, right? That famous passage. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ.

And people can, of course, want to translate that and apply it saying, well, he's just talking about the churches of Corinth. They're one body. Notice I said churches because there are many in Corinth, according to 1 Corinthians itself.

And it must be just talking about that, but he's not. He's talking about the church universal organized. They're growing because we read in verse 28, God has appointed these in the church.

First apostles, second prophets, third teachers, and that miracles and gifts of healings helps governments, a variety of tongues and the like. They're in the church singular. He appointed apostles.

He's writing this book to the Corinthians, the church of Corinthians. So as he's saying, when he says the church, he means only the Corinthian church and only the Corinthian church has the apostles. Just saying that you're like, obviously not.

When he's talking about, he says apostles. That's the first thing on his list. He gave him the church, first apostles.

Well, the apostles are for all the churches. What are they? In fact, they're all for all the churches. That tells you there's already an organization structured in the New Testament from the get-go because Christ appointed them over all the churches.

Already a unified one organization. That's where we start as Presbyterians. Already organized.

It's not a bunch of independent churches like, I guess we should get together and figure out how to do a top-down by Jesus Christ and the great commission. And here in saying that in

the church singular, he's not just saying the church of Corinth. He's saying all the churches because the apostles are for what? All the churches.

They're not just for the Corinthian church. I made my point clear. See that? And it's singular too.

He says in the church, but we know there's more than just the church of Corinth. There's the church of Jerusalem. There's Antioch and the apostles are over all of them.

But he calls it what? One church. And that organizationally, not the organic church. A lot of people, usually charismatics in my experience, they read all these passages.

The organic church is my personal relationship to God. No, it's the organized church. That's why he has that list in verse 28 of officers, of people doing public things.

All this from 1 Corinthians 12. There are many churches in one region, yet one church organizationally. It's already implied there in 1 Corinthians 12.

Ephesians, we read, for example, Ephesians, excuse me, Revelation, Ephesus, the church at Ephesus. Letter of Ephesians written to them. Revelation 2, 1 and 7. Revelation 2, 1 and 7, right? Where you have the letters to the churches.

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, he who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches, plural. And that's a refrain given. He writes a letter, he writes some description there and encouragement, often admonitions to these local churches here at Ephesus.

To the angel or minister, servant, messenger, so it could be pastor, it's probably pastor of the church of Ephesus. Church of Ephesus, singular. But then he ends there saying, the spirit says to the churches, plural.

To whom? Ephesus. And it says it again to the next church. Churches, plural.

Who? To whatever those collections of churches are. Plural and singular. Now if that's not clear to you, I can understand that.

It's even clearer in 1 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 2, we read of the church of Corinth. Church at Corinth.

So there it's very clear. 1 Corinthians 12, it's all the churches, the church universal organized. Here at the beginning, I'm writing this letter to the church of Corinth.

And yet we read in chapter 14 to that very church of Corinth, singular, church, no S's. Let your women keep silent in the church at Corinth. Oh no, churches, plural.

He says church, singular. Then he says churches, plural. What's going on here? Well because it's a plurality of churches organized as though they are one church.

What I would argue is a presbytery. Jerusalem as well. Now the Jerusalem argument is based on practical considerations that God works through practical means and practical consequences.

And we draw therefore practical conclusions. And we do this with the Bible more than we realize at times. They had 8,000 or more added to Jerusalem in such a short time.

You ask yourself, what did they all meet? Because brothers and sisters, back then they weren't having coliseums in every corner. They didn't have huge buildings like we had. The rich people had an extra space and they crammed it with what? 120 people in Acts 1. They're meeting in multiple churches.

There's multiple gatherings of Christians in Jerusalem, multiple churches, multiple leadership. And the apostles we see by the number of apostles and of course pastors, although there's not a number of pastors, a listing of the number of pastors, but the multiplicity of pastors mentioned there are presbyters as the word is often in Acts. There must therefore be multiple gatherings of God's people on the Lord's day and throughout the week.

Small gatherings. At that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And so in Acts 8.1, we read of the church singular at Jerusalem, but we know practically speaking, there had to be a bunch of churches there.

They had a bunch of leadership, 8,000 people. They don't have mega churches like we have back today because they didn't have access to buildings. They didn't own anything.

Where are they going to meet? They obviously met in small groups. So it's a bunch of small Christian churches called a singular church in Acts 8. And then we read of the elders of the church at Jerusalem again in verse 4 of Acts 15. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders.

And there we have the plurality of elders. Presumably you need a lot of elders if you have 8,000 converts. In Acts 15.25, we read, it seemed good to us being assembled with one accord to send and choose one man to you with our beloved Paul and Barnabas.

So there again, they're exercising there at Jerusalem. They are exercising church authority and power and sending a man. So this singular church, they're exercising authority.

And the name of the church is plural. Regional church with leadership, exercising authority. So now we're going to see here as well that these things actually happen.

It wasn't just a collection of churches, plural, called a church singular. We saw that two or three times already. And there's leadership involved.

I just read that there in Acts 15, the elders of Jerusalem, for example, over all these different churches. So we next have the regional church with leadership, exercising authority. They're not just sitting there pretty.

We're a bunch of church leaders in Antioch and Jerusalem and Corinth, and we have this position of power. We're not exercising at all in the name of the churches. We're just sitting here and doing nothing.

Of course not. The fact that God gave it to them, the fact that there are churches called church singular, that is they're organizationally structured as one, argues against that. So Acts 15 is probably one of the clearest ways of just demonstrating this fact that they are exercising authority.

Now Acts 15 is more along the lines of a denominational wide presbytery. And that was the word used at times in the early debates, the Presbyterians and the like in the 16th and 1700s, they would talk about a national presbytery or something like that and the like. And so you have that here because clearly Acts 15, they gathered together, as you recall, I'll read it to you, and certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

Whoa, what's going on here? You can't be saved? That's some serious stuff. Therefore, verse two of Acts 15, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension to dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, the apostles and elders about this question. Let's gather together an assembly of leaders and answer this question.

It's called the Jerusalem Council. You can call it a council, you can call it a synod, you can call it a general assembly, you can call it a national presbytery, I don't care what you call it. It's a regional collection of leaders over a bunch of churches.

And what's significant here is not just the apostles making decisions. If I had an apostle, I'd be like, I don't want to have a collection of ruling elders making decisions. Just pray to God and get an answer, please, because you're like a prophet.

But what do we see instead? They gather with the elders, with the brethren as well, to answer this question. An ordinary, boring office, working in conjunction with the extraordinary office of the apostles, because the apostles also did lots of boring and ordinary things as well, didn't they? They weren't always running around doing miracles and having visions from heaven. Much of the work of Christ, even in the Old Testament and New Testament eras, with all the miracles, was very mundane decisions and praying and fasting and trying to do the right thing.

And that's what they're doing here at Jerusalem. They gather together in this council and what? Exercise a regional collection of leadership, in this case, a very large region, exercising authority over many churches. And so already Acts 15 shows us that independency cannot stand for it is both presbyters or elders and apostles making the ruling.

But presbytery for us, of course, is less than this, but greater than a local church. And we see this in particular in the usage there in 1 Timothy 4.14, because it's used twice in the New Testament. That word there in the Greek is used twice, Luke 22.66 and Acts 22.5. You don't have to go there, because it's translated assembly or council of elders, depending on which translation you use.

Which, of course, is fine in many ways, because it's emphasizing the fact that it's an assembly or gathering of men making these decisions. And in both those contexts, the Jewish context is a regional decision. It wasn't over the Jewish church of Rome, because they had Jewish synagogues, and I say church, synagogues in Rome, but it was there in Jerusalem in particular.

So it's a local gathering of leadership of the Jews, and the word they use is presbytery. Paul uses the same word in 1 Timothy 4.14, because he doesn't think Timothy knows what the word means? No, because it's already established use among the Jews. And although they're not Jewish in the Old Testament sense anymore, they're of course Jewish ethnically and the like, Paul and them, although Timothy had a different father, they understood the Jewish ways of doing things and what the word would mean.

Of course, he picks it up and uses it in a Christian way. We don't expect to have the Pharisees lay hands on you. It'd be Christians, converts to Christianity, whether they're Jewish or not, to lay hands on another man.

We're going to call that a presbytery, just like the Jews had a regional collection there in Jerusalem, and Luke 22 and Acts 22 and the like, to deal with these matters, to exercise corporate rule over a multiplicity of churches. Now, laying on hands, lastly here, highlights as well that this assembly of a presbytery exercises public authority, in this case, setting aside a man for his office. That's what laying on hands is about.

It is about making it official before the world, because it must be done publicly, that this man has this office of presbyter. That's why we get the word presbyter, presbytery and the like in our circles. And there, we see an example of this of the apostles themselves.

This is always striking to me, whenever I read this and meditate upon it, and the way I grew up, of course, is that the apostles themselves submitted to the laying on of hands. Well, they have Jesus. We saw that in 1 Corinthians 1, right? I was baptized by Jesus.

I'm better than you. What? No. The apostles are like, no, we will submit to the church, the governance of the church, to ordinary officers who don't have extraordinary, amazing things.

And we read about that in Acts 13.3. Now, in the church that was at Antioch, there were certain prophets and teachers of Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Menaen, who had been brought up with Herod, the Tetrarch, and Saul. And they ministered to the Lord and fasted. And the Holy Spirit said, now separate to me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them, Saul, which is Paul.

Then having fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them and sent them away. This is not some hocus pocus magical stuff. That's not what laying on his hands is about.

It's about publicly setting aside somebody to the work of a public ministry, public responsibility on the body of Christ. It was a known and practiced event. They knew what it was, and that's what it was about.

And so being sent out by the Holy Spirit, verse four, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. They were sent out by the Holy Spirit. How? You ever thought about this? Verse three tells you how.

Having fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them and sent them away. The Holy Spirit uses ordinary means. In this case, the ordinary means of church officers setting aside, in this case, extraordinary men.

Paul, in particular, being an apostle, saw Jesus on the road and said, you must submit to us and do these works. And this is where the Spirit's sending you. That's what's going on here.

They were, of course, sent by extraordinary means, that the Spirit says in verse two, separate to Barnabas and Saul for the work of the ministry. Isn't that sufficient? I heard it, thus saith the Lord. Why do you have to lay hands on them? Because they are exercising authority in the name of the Holy Spirit, Christ, upon these men and sending them out, even though they were given that divine word.

So it was an extraordinary means the Spirit of God spoke. We don't expect that today, of course, but still he used what? Ordinary means. Men, leaders in the church, laying on of hands, praying and fasting and sending them out thereby.

## **Why Care about Presbytery?**

So we've established, I argue, that there are multiple churches designated as one church with church leaders exercising authority over them, what we call a presbytery. But so what? Why care about a presbytery? Well, I think if you're tired of pastoral scandals like I am, tired of false teaching, running amok in this nation, you're going to care. Because I would argue, when all things considered equal, this is one of the best methods to hold those things back.

I'll leave that as a suspense because the sermon's already long, and I'll pick it up next week. Let us pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are grateful, Lord God Almighty, for the details that you've given us there in the book of Acts, where we see the Holy Spirit telling them what to do, but they still exercise the ordinary means, Lord, and to do things in a proper and good manner, our God and Savior.

And may we do the same thing, to take seriously what it means to ordain officers in the body of Christ, that they should not ordain themselves, but rather, Lord, someone else should lay on hands upon them, that is, of a presbytery at a minimum. Our God and Savior, we pray and ask, Lord, that our eyes would be open to this truth, and we would embrace this organization of the body-- [cuts off]