



Thrones
Leveraging Authority to Help Others Win
Part 6 – Helping the Congregation Win
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Let me ask you a question and your answer to this question determines whether or not we can be friends. Raise your hand if you like donuts. Raise your hand if you don't like donuts. Are you an American? Okay, we can be friends, we can stay together. This isn't a random thought here; it's going to be a big part of the message about halfway through. How many of you are Dunkin Donuts? How many of you are Krispy Kreme donuts? Daylight Donuts. Shipley! Hurts! Anyway, stay focused. This is not the main point of the message; it's just an illustration.

I grew up on Dunkin Donuts. I still can remember Mary Jane Ludwig getting a dozen donuts, putting them on the center of the table, and opening it. I was wondering if I was being baited. *Can I have one, two, three, four...*

I didn't have a Krispy Kreme Donut until the year 2000. I walked into a Krispy Kreme, and who took me into it, because he's a part of this story, isn't important, but his initials are Jason Brawner. He's the brother of Travis Brawer, who spoke last week. He took me, for the first time, into a Krispy Kreme in Frisco, Texas. I had never been in one. We walked in and they handed me a donut. First of all, Dunkin Donuts never handed me a donut; that never happened.

I was shocked and that was good. I'm a one donut kind of guy, maybe two or three or four, depending on how bad the day has been, right? Your emotions determine how many donuts you're actually going to eat. So, I'm eating the donut. Jason orders a dozen. I've never told this story publicly, so I thought it's been a few years and I can tell it now. This is a true story.

He gets in line and he orders a dozen donuts and then turns around and asks me, "Do you want anything?"

This was brand new for me. I had no idea. I said, "What, that's not..."

He said, "No, if you want to get something, get something."

I go, "I've got this one here they gave me for free. Why do I need to order anything?"

We sat down. Jason opened the box and we had a conversation while he just ate one right after another. I've never seen a guy down so many donuts. At the time, he weighed about as much as this

pinky finger. He's got 15 years on him now. Not so much anymore. I was just sitting there amazed by that thinking that was a lot of donuts. He didn't eat the whole dozen. And I want to stop the story right there because we are going to pick it up in about 15 to 20 minutes.

Today, we are talking about *Helping the Congregation Win*. If you're brand new to our church, we decided to do a series on leadership and authority because we believe we live in a nation divided. We believe we live in a nation where authority and respect are going out the window. And all God's people said... Amen. It's not good. I showed my kids the Presidential Address and I said, "If you are ever in a room when the president walks in or anyone in a position worthy of respect... If your parents walk in, your grandparents walk in, I want to teach you what it means to be respectful. Carson, Corynn, stand up when they walk into the room. Show respect." Standing up is sign of respect, not a sign of agreeing with everything they believe or everything they teach. Not at all. It's just being respectful of authority.

We wanted to do an entire series, leading up to Easter, on authority, but the idea here is not that those in leadership would take authority to benefit themselves. The idea is that leadership and authority is to help others win. So, we've just been marching through it. How do you help your wife win? How do you help your child win? Last week, Travis did a fantastic job doing *How to Help Your Employees Win*. In a couple of weeks, we are going to be looking at *How to Help Your Grandchildren Win*. Today, the whole message is about how to help you win. It's the congregation, us as the body of Christ.

Who you are is more important than what you do.

We're going to start with this big idea of character and competency. Here's what I want us to take away as we begin with the tension of character versus competency. Who you are – I'm using that there to talk about character – is more important than what you do. We live in a world that tells you almost every day that you're not smart enough, you're not good looking enough, you're not winning enough, you're not successful enough, you don't have enough degrees, right? You're not enough.

We live with this idea that what you do is the most important thing about you. Think about it. It's what we say to someone when we meet them for the first time. I catch myself doing this all the time when I'm meeting a stranger. Within one or two seconds of the conversation, I jump to, "What do you do?" I want to know what you do because when you tell me what you do, whatever it is you do, for a moment, I'm going to have this *Oh, are you important or not?* Let's just be really honest.

They tell you what they do and maybe you've never heard of their job and your like, *Wow, you must be smart; you've got a complicated job*. Or they tell you something that maybe is just manual labor and maybe you're going to have a different lens now to look at that person.

But, to help the congregation win, we're starting with this big idea that we care more about your character – what's going on in your heart – than we do about what you do for a living. We care way more about what you are doing on the inside, what the Lord is doing on the inside of you than we do about how many degrees you have. Your age isn't that important to us around here; it's what's going on in the inside.

Church health is more important than church growth.

Now here's how this plays out in the church. Around here, we are consumed with church health. This is very important. We want to make sure we are healthy as a church, we're balanced in the purposes of the church, that we spend money with good stewardship, that we lead people well. Our desire is health and we believe that, just as who you are is more important than what you do, church health is more important than church growth.

This is super important. In the last couple of years, I can name for you four pastors of some of the largest churches in the country who are no longer serving in ministry. A couple of them are back in ministry, but their ministries imploded, their ministries fell apart because they were known for the church growth. And there's nothing wrong with church growth because healthy things can grow. But, let me also tell you, cancer grows and we wouldn't say that's healthy, right? We can have growth without health, but that's going to be a church that's not going to last too long or make any sort of impact in the kingdom. We understand to pursue health is first and foremost, but we're not afraid of growth. I'm a little afraid of growth, to be honest with you. I've been trying, with my political jokes, to keep us at two services for a very long time.

Honestly, because I've just gotten to a place in ministry and in my life where when sitting around with a group of pastors... Pastors are known for this more than anybody. "So, how many are you running?" That's going to be your first question? Why don't you start with asking me about my wife or start by asking me about my children? I've made this my discipline to not ask pastors, "So, how many services are you up to?" Because when they tell me how many services they are up to, sometimes I look at them like they are insane. "You should have launched another church by now. You should have planted another church. Or you should have done this thing called a teaching team. You should have gotten other people involved because that's a lot of people to try to manage."

Church leaders must prioritize character over competency.

Here's where we are with the church health/church growth conversation. Church leaders must prioritize character over competency in their lives and that should be their primary concern in the lives of every single person in the congregation.

There's another lady... I don't need to share her name, but her initials are Pat Kershaw. She sits on the third row of our church. We have coffee several times a year. Let me tell you something. Pat is 80. You don't mind me sharing your age? She says she's 82. She sleeps through most of the services. She gets one of her little naps... She never sleeps I've never seen Pat sleep during a service.

On a very serious note and this is to honor Pat this morning. I meet with Pat several times a year for coffee. We've been friends for almost 16 years now. I'll be honest with you. Pat is very uninterested in my competency or professional development. It's of no concern to her. Maybe a little... Do you know what she's always asking me about? It's my character. She's consumed with this for me and she loves to ask me the hard questions. I'm usually drinking a latte and she's having a hot chocolate. She wants to know how I'm doing. I know what "How are you doing?" means. She doesn't ask me "What are you

doing?” or “What’s the next step for the church or where are we going?” That’s of no concern to her. Do you know what is of concern to her? It’s that her pastor is pursuing health. Sometimes I give her an answer and I don’t know if she always believes me, but she’s consumed with it.

I know there are a lot of seasoned believers around this church that are very concerned about the health of the leaders because you’ve seen plenty of unhealthy leaders in the church. You know when you see an unhealthy leader and if that leader doesn’t get it under control, if that leader doesn’t come together and start to work on his character and pursue that more than his competency, you know what’s going to happen. He’s going to fail. His marriage is going to fall apart. His kids are going to leave him. The church is not going to do well for the long haul.

I love that Woodland Hills Family Church has become a church where there are a lot of leaders that call this church, seeking help because they got to a place where they pursued growth and not health and now they are at the end.

Our focus should be on the heart more than the performance.

As a congregation, here’s where we are heading. Our focus, all of us together, should be on the heart more than the performance. I know some of you who are brand new to the church are thinking *Yeah, but we love the performance*. Okay, we love the style here or the style there, but please make sure, in a church, that you begin to prioritize health over growth and character over competency because that’s what we want for you as well. That’s what should be driving you and your family as well.

If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Timothy 3. We are going to look at the first seven verses as we look at a list of character qualities for leadership. It’s not just a list. This is where people get confused. I’ve talked to some folks this week about the overseer qualifications list and they’re like, “Yeah, that’s a list for leaders.” And it’s interesting to me that people pick that up, but it’s not just a list for leaders. It’s a list for all of us. If you aspire to be a leader, you should be living these out.

Here’s the bottom line. First Timothy 3: 1-7 gives us a list of character qualities necessary for a leader to have in order to model and teach to the congregation. Why? It’s because we want you to have these character qualities as well. The goal of this list is not that we have... Paul doesn’t give this list to Timothy to lead out in the church to say, “Okay, put this list out there and it’s going to create this elite group of Christians and then we’ll separate them for this ordinary group of Christians.” That’s not at all what this list is. This list is if you are going to be a leader in the church, you better be living this out. We are going to march through each one of these 14 character qualities. You better be living these out because you’re leading people to live these out in their lives as well. That’s the bottom line.

So, the idea here is not elite verse ordinary. Let’s march through it and spend a little time with it. The whole time, I don’t want you to just be looking at me or the elders or the leaders of our church and judging if they are fitting. No; is this a list of holy living for you? A life set apart under Jesus Christ. Is this a list for you? Over at the Chapel, put the scone down, put the coffee down, get the list ready. Here’s we go.

1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer... Or a bishop or an elder; they are used interchangeably throughout the scripture. **...desires a noble task.** So, right off the bat, we learn aspiring to leadership is an okay thing. It's noble thing. It's not something that you should run away from. It's okay to pursue leadership in the church. And now we get into these traits.

2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach... The idea here... Sometimes we read this and people can think an overseer, an elder, a church leader should be sinless. No, and this is very important; you have to put a space between that. We should sin less, but we are not sinless. Does that make sense? Church leaders are not perfect, but we should be above reproach. We should be pursuing holy living. Church leaders should be living a life set apart unto Jesus. We're going to get some broad ideas in this character list and then Paul's going to take these big ideas and get specific with them in application. But, they are still all about character, not competency.

...faithful to his wife... This literally means a one-woman kind of man. This actually means someone who is faithful to his wife. I want you to know something about me and about every person that stands up and leads in worship, every person that leads with your children out there, every person leading worship and guiding over in the chapel today, every speaker, every elder of this church. You should be very concerned about their marriage. You should be concerned with how I'm loving my wife. You should be very concerned about whether or not I'm keeping the marriage bed pure. That should be high on your priority list.

You should know that Amy and I are becoming one. This is an important trait. You know this is a passion of ours at this church. Amy and I desire to have a great marriage and we prioritize our marriage as leaders. I know there are going to be plenty of times in the life of this church where we disappoint you because we don't meet your expectations. That's not an accident; that's on purpose. That's because we desire to protect our marriage. Remember we say this. God did not call us to Woodland Hills Family Church to be the best friend to every single person in here. He called us to lead in this church and to be a part of it.

Can I just say this? This is super important for us and I speak this on behalf of Ted and Amy Cunningham. Over the last 15 years, you have allowed us to have a great marriage. Some haven't. Some have left mad because of the expectations that get piled on, but you allow us to prioritize our marriage in the midst of ministry and to organize our lives to where we can serve the body of Christ as we believe faithfully, but we can do it in a way that doesn't cause us to leave. I'm telling you, a lot of pastors leave the ministry, a lot of church leaders abandon their post of leadership and authority because they see what it's doing to their family.

With my kids... My kids are like your kids; they're kids. I'm excited to be a part of a church that you don't put my kids in a bubble like a lot of PKs were put in. I'm grateful for that and I hope you hear my heart in that today. One of the things that I'm doing to try to leverage my authority as a pastor for the sake of my marriage and my family and everything is the teaching team. I hope you see that the teaching team is one way I get to leverage my leadership and authority here at this church to allow other people to lead.

I'm super excited for tomorrow. We're doing a writers and speakers workshop. Forty-six writers and speakers from Woodland Hills Family Church are going to gather. I asked my friend Margaret Feinberg to come in and she's going to talk to us about writing and I'm going to do one talk on how to put together a talk. I'm excited about this day because we've decided we've got to do more to equip the church. We've got to do more to give others leadership and responsibility. I feel, after 15 years of ministry at Woodland Hills, that I'm able to now leverage some of the credibility or authority or leadership or whatever you call it to allow other people to win.

Almost all of you are on board with that, but not all of you. I have to be honest with you. There's one guy... I don't know if he's in here, but he's been coming at my throat over this whole thing. We love you. I'm looking for him just to get security on the alert here before I say what I'm going to say. I may have spotted him. I kid you not. On January 29, I was scrolling through my birthday wishes on Facebook at the end of the day. Thank you for all the birthday wishes. I'm scrolling through them and I got to his. This is what he said. "Happy birthday to the biggest fraud pastor I've ever met." I'm thinking if you're going to come after me, don't do it in a birthday wish. That's one of the worst birthday wishes I've ever gotten. He said, "Abandoning his flock." Can I just tell you something, my friend? I ain't abandoning this flock. The teaching team is actually allowing me to enjoy ministry and be a part of this ministry for a lot longer than I ever planned. I just want you to hear that. And the teaching team is allowing me to be a good husband, a good father, and I'm able to use the gifts God has called me to.

Being faithful to my wife is on high priority because I've had too many friends... I've had one friend who was unfaithful to his wife multiple times in the church and he's out of ministry now. I've seen this over and over again. Just so you know, the leadership that we take seriously around the church... I have remained faithful to my wife. I'm a one-woman kind of man because if I'm not, she would kick my... Okay, let's just keep on moving.

...temperate... The idea here behind temperate is clear-headed. It's really kind of distraction free. It's not allowing anything to be a distraction. A leader that's clear-headed is pursuing the leadership role that the Lord has placed upon them and they don't allow a lot of distractions to take them off track.

self-controlled... We're going to spend a lot of time on this one because Verse 3 is going to build out on this character quality. Leaders and (please hear me) all believers are called to live a self-controlled life. Self-controlled means full control over your body and mind at all times. So, if you add this to what we just looked at that I'm to be clear-minded, but I'm also to be in control of my mind, in control of my body.

...respectable... Simply means of good behavior. This is where some of you are questioning me right now. I get the letters. I hope you've seen there are some words I used to use in the pulpit and then I started getting letters. I took that from the Lord. There are words that Dave Ramsey can use on the radio and everybody lets him use them. I thought if Dave Ramsey uses it, I can use it and then I use it and you're like, "Please stop using that word because I don't want my kids using it." When someone said that to me, I thought that was a good point. I have to remember kids are also in here; it's not just adults and we're all setting forth a pattern of behavior. I took that to heart. I want you to know there

are so many times that a word almost pops out of my mouth, but the Lord has posted a guard at my mouth.

...hospitable... This actually means to love strangers. I love this about Woodland Hills because I think you do. I think we do. I think our leadership truly does love strangers, love entertaining strangers. Some people may think it's way too casual here with the coffee and the seats and everything. Our environments and our experience is driven by hospitality. It's driven by a love for strangers.

...able to teach... This one is important that you keep in mind with character not competency. When a lot of people read what Paul is saying to Timothy, they get this all wrong. Again, if you read this with competency in mind, you would think this person needs to be in order and needs to be a great communicator. That's not it at all. Remember, this is in the middle of a list on character, on what's going on in the heart, meaning a leader needs to be teachable. They must have a character that is able to be taught and a character that can stand up and speak with authority, knowing they are actually living this out in their life.

One of the hardest things about teaching up here... I've spent a couple of weeks with the material you're hearing this morning. This is your first time hearing it. At about 1:00, I want to forget everything I've taught to you because I have to get ready for the next Sunday. But you are now going to live with it for a week and I'll be preparing for the next week's message. The purpose there is I've lived with it because I don't just want to have a bunch of information that I spew out when I teach or when I preach. I need to actually be living it, be walking through it.

Now we are going to go back to self-controlled and we're going to look at four more character traits that are important for a leader and we're going to spend a little bit of time on the next one. I've really prayed over this next one.

3 ...not given to drunkenness... It literally means addicted to wine. I have prayed over this one. I literally have a page full of notes just on this character trait. But then I thought this is not the time to debate wine. It really isn't. And clearly from scripture... I know some of you who were raised in certain denominations... The denominations don't matter, but their initials are Baptist and Assembly of God. That doesn't matter, but you were taught that alcohol is a sin and that's simply not true. According to the scripture, wine is a blessing.

I encourage you to write this down... You don't have time to look at it right now, but it's John Piper. Whenever I'm a little intimidated by a topic, I always go to someone with way more age and credibility than I. John Piper, out of Minneapolis, gives a 2 ½ minute clip because the young guys coming up in ministry are wearing out the old guys. They're doing Bible studies with a glass of bourbon... They're flaunting their gospel freedom. Pastor Piper does a great job of explaining this. He says, "Clearly from scripture, wine is a blessing, but the question we need to be asking is not can a Christian drink? The question we should be asking is should a Christian drink? That's a better question."

I love what Pastor John says and he says it clearly. I just stated his words from the scripture. Wine is a blessing according to the Bible. "Eat your food with gladness, drink your wine with a joyful heart, for

now God favors what you do.” This is important though Pastor Piper said, “I have an addictive personality. He said I’m a teetotaler not because of what the scripture teaches; I’m a teetotaler because of my addictive personality.” What he is saying is because of a lack of self-control, he can’t buy a pack of gum at the store without chewing the entire pack on the way home. Can I help you with what he’s saying there? It’s not about the gum, it’s not about the wine; it’s about self-control.

I know some of you wish Paul would have said to Timothy, “Don’t drink wine.” He actually says the opposite of that for his stomach’s sake when he was having health issues because the church was stressing him out. I have absolutely no idea what he’s talking about there. I didn’t drink wine until about four years ago, and it’s your fault; just so you know. I’m just following the scripture.

But can I get serious. This isn’t meant to be a punch line so I don’t want you to laugh because I know this is a very serious issue. I grew up in a church... My lip is quivering just saying that. I grew up in a church where I listened to obese and overweight preachers constantly telling me that drinking was a sin. I can remember as a little boy just thinking, *This doesn’t make any sense. Why have we said drinking is a sin, which isn’t what the Bible says. The Bible says drunkenness is a sin. Drunkenness is a sin, but we’re going to completely and totally ignore gluttony.* Can I just tell you that gluttony and drunkenness are on the same level? So, teetotalers, abstain; I’m great with that. But, don’t pat yourself on the back if you’re struggling in another area... you do one thing well, but just neglect this other? That is not the self-control that Paul is talking about here.

I thought about it this week. Why do I have a disdain for potlucks? I know it’s been a joke around here for a long time. Part of it is mayonnaise out in the Georgia sun that gave me food poisoning. That’s part of it. But, the other part of it was watching people who struggle with their weight go and load their plates with 3,000 and 4,000 calories at a potluck. The church didn’t only endorse it, we had jokes about it.

I shared what I was going to say with elders this week, I shared it with teaching team members... One of teaching team members said, “You know, it’s interesting that gluttony and gossip are the two sins we don’t ever really care to talk too much about.”

Some of you are struggling and it’s not about food. Do you know what it’s about? It’s about self-control. This is not a punchline so hear my heart in this if you don’t like my words. I think taking someone who struggles with their weight to a potluck is kind of like taking an alcoholic to an open bar. Is there anything wrong with going to a buffet? No. Just don’t get everything on it. Is there anything wrong with going to a potluck? Absolutely not, but you don’t need to sample everything. Is there anything wrong with a sip of wine? Absolutely not. Let me repeat that. Absolutely not. Just don’t drink the whole bottle.

Is there anything wrong with a donut? Did you see the callback? No. Just don’t eat the whole box... Jason. Is there anything wrong with technology? No. But you don’t need to upgrade your phone every time a new phone comes out. Self-control. Is there anything wrong with Netflix? No. Just don’t binge on it. Have self-control. When it says 19 seconds until the next one starts... “I know it’s 3:00 am and we need to work in the morning, but...” Turn it off. Practice some dang self-control. Sorry. I wasn’t

supposed use that word. Some of you are going, "Ted, can we smoke pot?" No. Not in Missouri. Let me make sure I clarify this: or anywhere for that matter. The issue is not the food, the issue is not the wine, the issue is not the gum, the issue is not the technology, the issue is not the television, the issue is self-control.

One more. I just want to stay here for a bit because I feel like some of you are reeling and thinking about what church you're going to visit next week. I may have solved our Easter crisis we were talking about this week. I heard a story a couple of weeks ago, from a friend. He said, "I found myself in a gathering of 30 pastors at a city-wide crusade. It was a famous evangelist and his mother was there. Mother is this fiery, old, small, Pentecostal woman."

A pastor raised his hand and he said, "Will you pray for me that the Lord would heal me of my diabetes?"

That fiery little Pentecostal woman said, "You get up here."

He walks up there and my friend said, "First of all, the first thing that cracked me up is she had to stand on her tiptoes to reach his head."

She put her hand on his head and she prayed, "Father, would you convict my friend of the sin in his life?" He asked for prayer for his diabetes. "Would you convict him and teach him self-control."

He said the whole room was in shock.

She said, "That he would stop eating those sugary snacks that are making him fat."

Now only that woman and Pat Kershaw can get away with saying that to me. But he said this pastor was weeping and weeping because he thought it was about the medicine and the doctors and all of that to cure his diabetes when he had an issue of self-control.

Now it's no secret around there that I am the least in shape among our teaching team. That's not a big secret. A few months ago, I told you about a lady that came to me and asked, "What's the name of that one teaching pastor... our athletic teaching pastor?"

I said, "Well, first of all, I'm offended. Second of all, it's all the other teaching pastors."

Including the new one last week. He makes me sick too. I'm sick of all of them. I need to think this through. So, we're taking applications for chubby teaching pastors. If you know of a chubby teaching pastor, you tell him to send me his resume and we're going to practice self-control together. We need to move on.

...not violent but gentle... We're still on the issue of self-control. Do you know what this actually means? It means not a striker. I'm not allowed to hit people. I have to be controlled in a confrontational situation.

...not quarrelsome... Then away from striker, you have this one. That means I should be able to hear your opinion and your thoughts and your ideas without constantly wanting to fight you and debate you. And I'm telling you something, this is something done easier the older you get. And all the old people said... "Amen. Yeah, the fight is all out of you around age 50 or 60. You just don't have the energy to do it anymore." But, a leader is not supposed to be quarrelsome.

As I was reading this list and studying it this week, I thought *Lord, how did you place me in leadership as early as I was placed in it?* I have been quarrelsome. I've never hit anybody, just so you know. I've never punched anybody. I heard the story of a guy that decked Charles Stanley one time. Andy Stanley was 12 years old. Charles tells the story. Andy jumped out of the front row to go take the guy down, but Charles didn't hit back.

...not a lover of money... Still on the issue of self-control. I hear Christians sometimes say money is the root of all evil. Money is not the root of all evil. The love of money is the root of all evil. You need to be self-controlled. You need to know when to put the debit card down, put the credit card down.

I picked up something last week... My daughter turns 14 this year. She's the fisherman in our family. I haven't really been fly fishing for about ten years. She said she wanted to go so I dusted off my stuff and got it ready and took her down to the dam last week for some daddy/daughter dam fishing. Anyway, that was in context. You can't get mad at me for that one. That was spelled D-A-M. There are Baptists in here having convulsions right now, aren't there?

I walked into the store. I'm looking at Jon Jenkins back there. He's a passionate fly fisherman too. I walked into the store and I realized that when I started fly fishing ten years ago, I didn't have as much money in my wallet as I had this week when I walked into the place. I don't know if you've been in a fly fishing shop, but you really want one or two of everything in there. That's fishermen. You don't need the stuff you're actually buying; it just looks so cool and it's awesome. My thought was I don't even have to look at price tags; I'm just going to buy whatever I want. No. And remember this. With all of this – wine, food, money – just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Know when to put the debit card down.

We have to hustle through this. You guys have been dragging this sermon out. We need to keep it going. Now watch the next two verses. We're going to go back to the husband of one wife and how the family room and the board room are linked.

4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. So, not provoking my children towards wrath. We looked at this in *Helping Your Child Win* two weeks ago. **5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)** This is why you want to make sure a leader is managing his family well and has a good marriage. Why? Because that's what we want for every single person in here. That's the goal for everyone in here.

6 He must not be a recent convert... Why? Have you met a recent convert? A recent convert, if they are on fire for the Lord... I can give you example after example. Recent converts are quarrelsome. They are ready to fight. They have found something out.

My son is passionate about apologetics. I love that he's learning it. He's 11 years old. I tell him, "Learn all of this, be open debate and dialogue, but learning creations versus evolution is not for the purpose for you to argue and fight with people. You can debate them with respect, but don't be a quarrelsome person."

Paul is telling Timothy that he be can't a recent convert. Why? ***...or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.***

7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

As we kind of land the plane on this, why should church leaders prioritize character over competency? Why should you be concerned about my character more than my competency? Why should you be more concerned about my heart than you are my professional development? That's because you should be more concerned about your heart more than your professional development. This list that we've been walking through applies to you. You should be practicing this in your life as well.

Holy living, which means to be set apart unto Christ, unto Christian service, unto Christian ministry, **is for all Christians not "elite" or "ordinary" Christians.** We don't have those two categories. The bottom line is this. **Whatever you expect in my behavior, you should expect in yours as well.**

Have you ever been to a party? I go to them all the time where I walk up and somebody is telling a joke. I show up and hear this; "Be careful, the preacher's here." What does me being there have to do with anything? Have you thought about that? I ain't the Pope. I ain't a priest. And even if I was the Pope or a priest, that shouldn't determine your behavior. You should be more concerned about what's happening on the inside of you and the fact that Jesus is at work in you, that the Holy Spirit is calling you by name.

It's the same reason I get ticked off when I go to a party and I'm the only one who knows how to pray. "The preacher's here; let him pray."

"Do none of you other Christians know how to stinking pray? We've been teaching this for years. You're praying tonight."

"I don't want to pray."

"Oh, you're praying and I'm ticked and I'm not in a good mood to pray right now, so I refuse. I won't even pray. How about that?"

Whatever you expect in my behavior, you should expect in yours as well. I'll say it again because I don't think some of you are getting it. You like "Well, I don't aspire to be a leader." But if you are a follower of Jesus, you should be living a life where you are faithful to your wife, faithful to your spouse, you have self-control, you have a love of strangers, you are hospitable to them in the church, you're not addicted to wine, you're not going to go home and drink every day, and you're going to know when to set the fork down. You're going to know when to set the glass down. You're going to know when you're flipping through the channels or you get on a show you shouldn't be watching, when to change the channel. This is for all of us.

Now watch, when we go to take the Lord's Supper... I feel like we need a really deep moment of purging, cleaning before we take the Lord's Supper because watch how this ties in to 1 Corinthians 11 and what Paul has to deal with in the church in Corinth.

Speaking specifically of the Lord's Supper, he says this: ***I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk.*** At the Lord's Supper table, people are abusing food and wine. ***22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter! 23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.***

This is where we want to begin. I want to ask that you bow your head, close your eyes. Here's what we are going to do. The scripture says clearly a man must examine himself and in so doing, he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

If you are not a believer in Christ Jesus, you've not placed faith in Jesus, you may confess your sins and believe in your heart that Christ has been raised from the dead. Placing faith in Jesus today and becoming a Christian, you may take the Lord's Supper with us today. If you are not a follower of Jesus and you are not professing faith in Jesus, we ask that you not take part in this part of our service.

For the believer in Christ Jesus, prepare the elements and examine your heart. Confess sin. The list we just went through, ask the Holy Spirit to call you by name in areas where you are falling short. The whole point of the Lord's Supper is to be reminded that it is not our behavior that brings us into a right relationship with God. It is Jesus that brings us into a right relationship with God. For by grace you are saved through faith; it is not of works so that no one can boast about it. You were saved because of the work of Jesus Christ, his shed blood for you. Today, we take the Lord's Supper to remind ourselves of that.

You know what we talked about today: holy living and thinking more about what's going on in the inside. That doesn't bring us salvation; that is an overflow of our salvation. That is a reflection of the desire we have to live for the Lord modeled in our leaders, taught by our leaders, reflected in the entire

congregation. Use the list we went through today to examine your heart and then we will take the Lord's Supper together.

Paul said, ***The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

Father, it's through the authority of the name of Jesus and the power of the blood of Jesus that we come today in remembrance of his death for us. Our salvation comes to us through Jesus, by faith in Jesus. Everything we have spoken of this morning and the way that we live our lives is an overflow of that salvation, not an effort to receive it. May we be grateful for that today.

May we celebrate that today as a church family. I pray for the leaders of Woodland Hills Family Church that you would cover their homes in the blood of Jesus, cover their ministries and their callings in the blood of Jesus. For every member of this church, protect them from evil. For those who are our guests today, I pray that through your word and through worship today, they would be challenged, encouraged, uplifted, convicted how ever you are working in the hearts of men and women throughout this place and throughout the chapel and even online today.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus. And everyone agreed and said... amen.