

Dear Son
Part Five – Deacons
Pastor Ted Cunningham

It's great to be here on a hot summer day. It's supposed to hit 95 again today, so they say, and it's good to get inside and breath, right? This has been good. Is everybody having a good summer? Today we are going to be halfway finished with our Dear Son series in 1 Timothy. If you have your Bibles, turn to 1 Timothy 3. We are going to finish this chapter.

If you don't have a Bible, Woodland Hills would love to give you one. You can stop by the Welcome Center on your way out today and fill out that connection card. As you are turning to 1 Timothy, we are going to take offering today in these buckets. Just kind of let me share with you. You can put August 10-12 on your calendar to be praying for Ted Burden, myself, Paul Etheridge, and then a couple of others from Cross International. We will be taking a trip to Haiti.

We are going to be checking out two sites for our church to choose which one we will adopt and actually build on. It has been narrowed down to two sites. Then the goal and desire is that not only do we build a building there with the \$100,000.00 we are trying to raise this year, but that we would be the ones to put shoes on them every year and put clothes on them and feed them, whether it's 60, 75 or 90 students moving into that school. So that's our goal. We look forward to bringing that back to you.

I would hope we don't forget about Haiti, not just our church, but I'm talking about our community and our nation. One point five million people are still displaced from Port Au Prince. Health clinics are shutting down because funding is drying up. A lot of money that was promised on the front end hasn't shown up yet. To be honest with you, there is still much chaos in that country. Supplies can get there, but getting the supplies distributed to the millions of people in need has become quite the challenge.

So Woodland Hills is going to stick with Haiti, helping them rebuild. We look forward to trips. Many of you are asking us about going down there. We look forward to putting trips together to actually serve by building, and by sending teams down to do backyard Bible studies or vacation Bible schools. We will keep you informed with that.

We just ask that you pray for a first big start for us on August 10 -12 for safety and just being able to discern where the Lord is leading us on picking the right site to build on. So, again, thank you for your generous giving. If you are a guest here today, we don't want you to feel an obligation to give, but if the Lord lays it on your heart to do so, we encourage you to do that.

Today... let me just tell you what we are talking about. Here's the sermon title: *Deacons*. Some of you are thinking this is going to be awesome. I will validate the fact that speaking on deacons is probably not

the sexiest talk in the world. Some of you are thinking “Wow, I brought my friends here today at Woodland Hills to hear a message that’s going to impact their life.” Well today is one of those messages that’s not about me and not about you, but it’s about us. It’s about how we function as a family.

I hope you’ve enjoyed Bill Rogers and me kind of tag teaming this series because it’s a letter from... I’m not going to say old pastor to young pastor. It’s from a maturing man of the faith to a younger man in the faith. We have kind of been doing that in this series. Bill Rogers has been the mature pastor of 60 plus years, talking to young Ted or young Timothy, the younger pastor growing up in the faith. That’s what this letter is. I’ll switch it to Paul and Timothy. It’s an old pastor talking to a young pastor and encouraging him on how to lead the church.

We’ve had some pretty challenging talks in this series so far and today is probably one of them. We are in 1 Timothy 3 and we are going to pick up in Verse 8. This is a talk to the servants of this church. Many of you come from a denomination that had deacons that led the whole church. Your deacons, especially if you grew up Baptist, where the ones who got together once a month for a deacon’s meeting. They were the ones that picked the next pastor coming in because they ran the last one out. They are the ones picking the new guy and they are the ones deciding if they should fix that gutter now, or if they should start the building program, or what the budgets look like. In many ways, their role is correct. They are the servants. They are the ones making sure that the work of ministry is getting done.

At Woodland Hills, we are an elder-led church, meaning we believe there are two different functions. We believe the elders are to be all about prayer and the word of God, making sure the church is being led correctly, theologically. And the primary task is to proclaim that and to make sure we are all on the same page with where we stand with Jesus and with each other. That’s the role of elders.

Then the role of deacons... We have deacons in our church. They are servants. They’re the ones that actually keep the budgets. They are directors in our church. Many of you had deacons in your church that kept the budget for a particular ministry: children’s, or youth, or adults, or women’s, or men’s. They were in charge of that area. The word for deacon means a servant. So here’s where it does affect you. Our desire is that you become a servant in this church. Some of you are aspiring to leadership in your own life and in your ministry to your family. Today we are going to see the qualifications of the servants of the church. If you want to serve the church and serve people this is what it takes, these are the leadership qualifications.

My dad served as a deacon for 15 to 20 years. He said that’s long enough that’s why I’m not serving here. But he served for a long time as a deacon. I can remember every Sunday he’d be counting the money and then at home doing the budgets and all that. So it was doing the work of ministry. Today we are going to talk about those deacons, the qualifications, why it’s a challenge to do ministry in the church, and why we need these qualifications.

In a second, Paul is going to say to Timothy, It looks like I’m going to be delayed so the reason I’m giving you these qualifications and making sure that you have elders leading the church well and then deacons serving the church well is because I may not be able to get to you and this is how you need to learn to conduct yourselves in the household of God.

You really get this formation of this deacon or this servant in Acts 6. There was a segment of the population that was being neglected or a segment of the church community that was being neglected and it was the widows. We talked about this a couple weeks ago. Paul is going to share it in 1 Timothy 5. There is a list that you actually now have by the time you get to Ephesus, but in Acts 6 the elders and the apostles of the church said we can't neglect the teaching of the word of God; we can't neglect the prayer to very important ministries. So it's not that the ministry to widows isn't important, but we don't have time to do both, is what it's saying, so we need to get some guys and gals over here... And you see this in men and in women, and we'll talk about that in just a second. Let the elders continue to preach and to teach and to pray, and then get these guys serving. That's the commentary on Acts 6.

So we will jump right into 1 Timothy 3 and look at these servants in the church. It says this: ⁸**Deacons, likewise...** This is going off of verses 1-7, the role of elders. **...are to be men worthy of respect...** They are to be people that you admire. They are to be people I look at and go "I want my son and daughter to turn out like them." I'm going to go ahead and place Ted and Amy Cunningham's children, Corynn and Carson, under the leadership of these people; they are worthy of respect.

...sincere... They are not blowing smoke; they are not about the smoke and mirrors. I like how Ted Burden always puts this. "You know you are a servant by the way you act when you are treated like one." That's a sincere person. You have to be careful when you are serving in ministry that you don't do your works, as Jesus talks about, as before men. The Pharisees did what? They were hypocrites. Their entire ministry was geared as being seen by you.

And to be really honest... We've talked about this a lot at Woodland Hills and in Branson. We have to be careful that as we give our money, we guard our hearts from putting it on big checks and presenting them to people. Jesus says you've received your reward. If public recognition for your ministry was your goal, to be seen by men, Jesus says you have received your reward.

It's what you do in silence. That's why you don't even know who some of the best servants in this church are. I talk about her all the time, but Denise Bevins... If you ever read in the paper that something happened to Denise and she passed away during the week, don't bother coming on Sunday; we will be closed for ever and ever. We will never open again because I would not know what to do. Jim, Bill, Doug, what are we going to do. I don't even know where the files are kept. I don't now where all those plastic cups are stored. I'd have to go find those.

If something happened to Stephanie Watson, where do we keep the Gold Fish around this place? All that ministry that takes place... this is saying a sincere person, someone who can serve in silence and not have to have it known or plastered in the paper... It says this person is sincere in their serving and then I love this next one.

...not indulging in much wine... If you are going to serve at Woodland Hills Family Church, I, as your pastor, am limiting you to two bottles a week. I said this to somebody this morning and do you know what their response was? Their response was "Is that per family or per person?" It's per person, all right? But now listen; some of you abstain all together from wine. You can't read your Bible and tell me alcohol is sin because you know what you are? You are a Gnostic.

The Gnostics in the next chapter... Bill will cover this next week and explain to you all the rules on alcohol, but for now, let me give you just a brief overview. The Gnostics came in and believed material things were bad so they told people to abstain from marriage and to abstain from certain foods. That's not it. There is nothing evil in it. Some of you are thinking "Oh boy, he's already picked on the fact that the Baptists are screwed up in their leadership and now this is like..." This was our second point of theology at our church right here because it was for many of you. But it clearly says ***not indulging in much wine.***

Now every point we give today you have to trace back to serving because God is great, beer is good, and people are crazy. Think about this for a second. I want you to think about how everything we talk about today has to do with serving people. The reason these qualifications are so important is because in ministry, people are going to come to you with their problems. If you are a guy or gal in this church who serves and you medicate your pain with alcohol, ministry is not going to be a good place for you.

Working with people is not something you need to do because people will make you crazy. You will go home carrying their burdens, frustrated that they didn't change and you saw right it front of them. As they brought their problems to you, you saw what could change and how they could be helped, but it was too overwhelming for you and they wouldn't change so you go home and you medicate. Paul is saying they can't indulge in much wine because if they start serving in the church at Ephesus, they will be drunk every night; that's the truth.

So some of you have to abstain all together and we honor that; you don't drink at all. Others of you drink red wine which is okay, unless you are eating fish, and then you need to switch to white wine. Any fish or seafood, I suggest a pairing of a nice white wine. But he is saying you can't indulge in this because once you really start serving people, you will go overboard and you will end up drunk. He says don't do it. Later on in this book, he is going to tell Timothy, who must have been abstaining... I don't know if he was abstaining because conscience or what, but he tells Timothy to take a glass a wine. He says here that he can't indulge in it, but Lord knows what people are like so Timothy, take the edge off with a little chardonnay.

...and not pursuing dishonest gain. Again, we are going to tie it straight back to serving people in ministry. We have to be careful when we put people in ministry here because when someone comes to you with their problem; they are hurting financially, you say "Well I'm the perfect deacon; I'm the perfect servant for you to actually have met. Do you know why? I just started a brand new business and if I could sign you up and four of your friends and you'd be on the fast track to success." Is there anything wrong with making money? No. Some of you are hard workers and you've made a lot of money in your life and blessings to you. Steward it well.

Here, he is talking about dishonest gain. I don't care if it is a greeter at the door, making sodas or coffee, passing out the bulletins, if you put somebody in a ministry position who is after dishonest gain or get rich quick schemes, that's a bad, scary person to have in ministry because the potential is that they will take advantage of people and you have to be on guard. A deacon, a servant in the church, can't be getting drunk because people are all a mess or getting them signed up under their business, pursuing dishonest gain. Some of you are going to write letters or emails to me going "I tithe off of that!"

Continue to do that, but you also know the difference between honest gain and dishonest gain and you know the difference between telling the person sitting across the table from you at Panera or Starbucks the truth and withholding just enough truth so they will sign and get you that next check. You know the difference between honest and dishonest.

²They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. Meaning they don't have to be speakers of great theology, but they have to hold to great theology.

We had an elders meeting this Wednesday and Bill Rogers... Bill Rogers and Jim Sedlacek are our two elders; they are guys that are for sheep caught in thickets. They have been doing a fantastic job in this church. I'm concerned this will open the flood gates in some way, but what happens is when a member of this church gets cross with another member of our church, that's a perfect role for elders to step into. If it can't be handled at a deacon level or at a ministry level, the elders step in.

Bill Rogers made a great point to the elders this week. He said, "We have a lot of people serving in our church who are not members of our church." Many of them think they are members. One of the reasons we believe in church membership is right here. When you want to begin serving, we are putting you in a position of ministry or a position of leading and we need to know you believe what we believe. It would make no sense for you... We have had this happen in the church time and time again where we are teaching something from the front, sending people out to a small group and the small group leader is like "Well he was all wrong; here's what you need to believe." They begin working against and it becomes divisive and back shifts. We begin going after each other.

Bill said we need to make sure the people serving in our church are members of our church. Not so we can have you on a role and send you a letter at Christmas saying "We think you make this much and you've been giving this much." We are not doing it for that purpose. We are doing it so you believe what we believe and what we are trying to accomplish here. That's the goal; that's our passion; that's our heartbeat. Bill used a phrase and I've never heard the phrase used in church before and it comes from a guy that is so grace-based. He says we need something to be able to sink our teeth into.

When we go to two people in the church, because of the generation that we are living in and the culture we are living in that is so against authority... Mom and Dad you understand this with the authority that's being pushed away in your home. That desire to not listen to you; it happens in the church. You need the elders of the church to be able to rest over you in a position of authority because they love you and they care for you. If you want to serve at Woodland Hills, we need to know you have good theology that you believe.

It's really subtle and this is why we have many layers of leaders in a church. But you get around somebody serving and you don't ever really hear them talking about Jesus or Christ, but they use the world *religion*. It's with kindness, but you get that they don't really grasp what's going on. It says here that if you are going to put somebody in a position of serving other people in the church, they have to hold onto the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

Then look at Verse 10. This is where most churches get in a lot of trouble. ¹⁰***They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*** Let them serve; let people serve in the church once they've been tested. I want you to notice something about this verse that we made big mistakes with early on in our church. A lot of times people see this verse and they interpret it to mean that you bring the name up, nominating an elder or deacon, and what you do is wait and see if anybody has a problem with them. Guess what? You almost always will.

What it's saying here is watch this person; see how this person acts with his family. In a second he is going to say he has to be able to manage his home well. Why in the world would we put somebody in a position of leadership or ministry here at Woodland Hills, to lead a campus like this, if they don't know how to take care of their own home? If they don't mow their own lawn, if they don't vacuum their own home, why would we say hey come and manage this huge facility? If they can't manage a couple of bucks or they are always going into debt and they don't have enough money and they can't manage \$50,000.00 a year, why would we ask them into a position of leadership to manage a million dollars a year. That's what it means by test.

To take in one step further, if a guy can't manage a five and a seven year old, why in the world would you want him trying to lead hundreds of five and seven olds. It's like let's watch him here. If he's pulling his hair out here... these are the people that, when you dropped off in Wild Woods, there may have been one or two of them that were kind of frustrated. That's because they just came from that at home. We are removing them this morning if they do that, you need to know that.

But it said they are to be tested. We watch their life and their behavior; how they handle money, home, family. If there is nothing against them, let them serve. He who can be trusted with little will be given more. Meaning we have to make sure that you are able to handle the little bit God has placed in your life right now called your family, before we go handing you a big family called Woodland Hills family.

Now we get to Verse 11, which is the most debated passage in this chapter. We had a big one in 1 Timothy 2. But there is a debate: can women be deacons? Many of you, again, let me go back to the Baptist because Jesus was a Baptist. The Baptist had male deacons, but many times the reasons they had male deacons was because those deacons had the function of elders. They were operating as elders without the title. Many of you had female deacons in your Baptist church; they were functioning as female deacons, but they weren't given the title. They were called directors. We called them directors and we do that at Woodland Hills. My wife is a director here. But you know what? She is a deacon. Stephanie Watson is a deacon. Functionally, they serve the purpose of ministry servants.

There are three exegetical options of Verse 11. The first one is referring to a female deacon, Verse 11. The second one is a female deacon married to a male deacon or it's a woman married to a male deacon. The third option would be that it's a female deacon, serving a male deacon. Those are the three primary options that people choose to pick from and I believe, through my course of study of this and through countless commentary, that it can be all three referred to here.

Whether you gave them the title or not, the church you came from more than likely had women serving in the role of deacon, but with a different title to make everybody happy. So we are going to look at

women here now serving in ministry because there is something extra special about them that can be a stumbling block as they serve within the church.

²¹***In the same way...*** So everything we just shared applies to both men and women and now he is going to speak directly to women serving in the church. ...***their wives are to be women worthy of respect...*** Meaning I want my daughter to grow up being like this person. And then look at the next two. It's been a long summer. I want you to look at the next two. ...***not malicious talkers but temperate...*** Here's where women get in trouble in ministry or in serving people in the church. It's with their mouth and with their moods.

Here's what happens. Somebody comes to you in ministry for counsel. We have to make sure the women serving in the ministries of this church can rise above it and minister to them rather than join in with it. If you've ever been to a small group that is a husband-bashing small group, it doesn't have a good leader. That leader needs to be able to come in and rise above it and lead people out of that. You are going to have people coming to you for counsel and you can't be a malicious talker. When they share their pain with you, you don't go to the next meeting and go "We need to pray for her" and then spend the next ten minutes explaining what you need to pray about. If you're not careful, your ministry can turn into gossip.

And then it says they must be temperate. Do you know what the opposite of temperate is? It's moody. We are going where angels don't even dare to tread right now. It's saying that it's going to be difficult for a woman serving in the church with moods like this. Do you know why? It's because you never know which woman you are getting. If I can be very honest with you... and I share this in love. When I pull in the driveway every night, do you know the thing I am most grateful for in Amy Cunningham? She is just steady; she's just smooth. I don't pull into the driveway at night going "Father, which woman am I getting tonight?" I have friends who do. I have friends who pull into the driveway at night and go "Father in heaven, I have served all day. I love you with all of my heart. Give me the good wife tonight. I want the good one. I don't want the moody one."

It's my favorite Everybody Loves Raymond episode where Raymond decides he is going to help his wife and so he goes and buys her some over the counter medicine that starts with an M and rhymes with Tydol. He brings it home and he is so excited to break it open and give his wife a couple of pills. I can't actually say the word, but how many of you know what episode I'm talking about? She grabs it and he goes "Look, it's going to help with this, this, this, this, and this." She grabs it and goes "Oh, look it's missing one. It doesn't look like it's going to help with witchy." He goes, "Yea, I think we're going to need a prescription for that." We should have shown that clip.

But that's what he is saying. I hope you see the heart of Paul here and the heart of God's word for you and for this church. He is saying if you're on a moody roller coaster in life, ministry is going to be very hard for you and people are going to get bad advice; you're going to give bad counsel. They may get counsel from the mean one right now.

I'll be honest with you, Stephanie Watson, right there with Denise, is one of the greatest servants of this church. We pay Stephanie Watson part time and she works full time at this church. She has worked

herself into that. The elders are probably wondering why I have to say that like that, because it just sounds like we're mean. But it's because she loves doing it so much. She works hard. She can do her job of serving so well.

Honestly, what she wasn't really prepared for when she got into ministry at the level she is in it, was the moods of people. She's had to make some hard ministry calls with people she has placed in positions of ministry who were moody. They weren't temperate and they would look at her like she was the problem. She would come to me and ask me what I thought she should do. I would say you just sideline this person for a little while. Ted Burden has done that for six years here at this church and he's done it for 35 years in ministry. You have to do that because if it's not a temperate person, they would bring the whole ship down. He says you can't be a malicious talker, you can't be moody. Then he says **...and trustworthy in everything.**

Then he goes to Verse 12 and he is now going to talk to the guys. **¹²A deacon must be the husband of but one wife...** So guys, we can take this too; put your cup on and let's go. You have to be a one woman man. This verse has been used time and time again to refer to whether or not you allow a deacon, who has been divorced, to serve. We've had guys... I grew up in a church where they were divorced prior to knowing Christ. They came to know Christ, but we never let them serve in the church in that way. What's funny is we gave them the function without the title. They were some of the biggest servers in the church.

The scripture here is talking about a one woman man. If you murdered three people prior to coming to know the Lord and you came to know Christ, we'd make you a deacon and put you on stage, sharing your testimony. But if you were divorced prior to Christ, no. But it's saying one woman man. Do you know what it means? Single guys, do you know what it means for you? You can't be thinking about sleeping with another man's wife. You can't go home and turn on the computer and watch porn. You have to be a one woman man. Your mind has to be focused on one woman.

Now why is this important? Let's again tie it back to serving. It's because you will have broken hearted people come into your ministry. Why do pastors have affairs? It's because they are not guarded on this one woman quality. They come to a woman who is in a broken marriage and they do something that her husband hasn't done for years and that is they listen to her. They listen to her for a long period of time and she's crying and she's emotional. After listening to her, they begin to validate her; they begin to understand her; they begin to say things to her. If they are not careful, as she leaves the room, the pastor, the deacon, the elder will stand up and give her a hug and that may be the first hug she's had in a long time. And it's not far that the pastor, the deacon, the elder is sitting back going "What in the heck am I doing? How did I end up sleeping with the woman?"

It's because in ministry, broken people are susceptible to that. Hurting people, fragile people, can be taken advantage of and he's saying to the men, "Yea, we can look at the ladies and go your mouth and your moods will get you in trouble, but guys, you can get in trouble sexually. You need to be on guard, you need to be a one woman man."

I've been made fun of a lot in ministry for being aloof. You know I'm not a big hugger. I told you about Joe White at the last Men at the Cross. A guy broke in the middle of his talk and was sobbing. He comes forward and falls on Joe. I looked at the time and I realized that Joe had fifteen minutes left to talk. This guy is sobbing and sobbing. Joe grabs him by the back of the head and he just keeps going. I'm backstage wondering what to do. Here's what I was going to do, but I thought... How awkward would this look: me, walking next to Joe, going "Come here big fella, come here."

Amy says "Ted, don't let people get down on you too much for that because I enjoy that. I am thrilled to know that you will never meet with a woman and you'll never drive a woman. I learned this at my college, but you are really clear on this, Ted. You don't just *want* to be a one woman man, you put practices and steps into your life to make sure you are a one woman man." That's why Amy has full access to my computer. She can look at it any time. She is a Facebook friend. I don't become friends with girls named Trixie or Pixie Dust or whatever all that stuff is.

Some of you guys are not guarded in this area. Can you, for a moment, take the burden of the elders and think about the responsibility we have in putting people in leadership positions and in ministry positions. If we don't test a guy, if we don't know who he is and how he is living his life and we put him in a ministry position and he takes advantage of women in the church, that's a burden that we carry. That's something we have to be very careful about. We have to test people to make sure they are not going to act out on adults or children. This is something we take very seriously.

Guys, we have to be guarded in this area. You can't serve in the church if you're given to much wine because you'll go home and get drunk every night serving people. You'll meet with women who are gullible because of their situation and you'll take advantage of that. You have to be guarded in that.

It goes on to say **...and must manage his children and his household well**. Again, the text has been abused a lot in the church and it's been used to say that if a pastor or an elder or a deacon has one child who has kind of gone off the road in their late teens or twenties... Listen that would disqualify almost every nationally known pastor you know.

It's saying does this guy manage his household well? Does he manage his children well? Are his children fighting at him? If he can't manage his children well, I don't know how he is going to manage a hundred people well. Is this a guy who is loving his wife and his wife is respecting him? If he can't lead his wife well, why in the world would we want to bring him into the church to try to have him lead here?

Why would we give him money that he can't even manage on his own? Again, I say this of our staff and I say this of our elders of this church: they manage well. I talk to our elders. They've been very open with me as I am younger, planning my financial future out. Whether it's 401k... Because when the stock market went bust, I wanted to take a trip and quit putting money in the 401k. These are guys who have done it. They manage things well. The money of Woodland Hills Family Church is in good hands with the leaders because they manage their homes well and they manage their own personal finances well.

¹³Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. I'll finish this off and then we will close.

¹⁴**Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you...** And this is probably what it has felt like this morning. **...these instructions...** These are instructions. These are clearly how the church is to be led and how the church is to be served; they are instructions. We don't just find gaping holes in ministry and drop warm bodies into them. It's important to put qualified people in positions of ministry.

He says I've written you these instructions **...so that, ¹⁵if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household...** We are a family church. We are constantly giving the message of men, lead your homes and wives, love and respect your husbands, and children, obey your parents in the Lord. Honor your adult and aging parents. Parent, don't provoke your kids to wrath; keep their spirits open, raise them well. We are constantly saying all these things.

He is saying this is a family right here too. We are a family, Woodland Hills Family Church. Just like the home needs clear instructions for how to be led, we need clear instructions on how to be led. We need to know this is how it works. I can say that, eight years into this church, we are far better at this than we were early on. "You have a driver's license? We'd love for you to serve." "Can you get here by eight? Well you are qualified." Nowhere on here is "be there by eight."

Look at all these other qualifications, as we've grown, that they have put into place. It says this is how we are to conduct ourselves in God's household **...which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.** We are proclaiming the truth and we need to lead on the foundation of that truth. ¹⁶**Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.**

Everything Paul does, all this that seemed like meticulous instruction in how we are to lead, he brings it back and ends it with Jesus. In Chapter 2 he says we are heralds of the gospel of Jesus. Our job is to run around Branson, telling people about Jesus. Women, make sure that you are not immodest to distract from that message. Guys, don't be argumentative and always debating and disputing as to prevent that message of Jesus from going out. Here he says make sure the house is in order so that when people look at Woodland Hills, it's not in chaos and disarray because it's about Jesus. He's the one we continue to proclaim and we want to lead and serve this church likewise.

Father, it's in the name of Jesus that we thank you, as a church, for this very instructive book. We have many great servants here and many people who are constantly doing the work of ministry. I am encouraged today by your word, knowing that I have much to live up to. There are many in here who haven't taken a place of leadership or a place of serving because they don't feel qualified. We pray that they would take these qualifications today and begin to work on their heart and their life and on their family.

There are men here today who have built great businesses. There are women here today who have been very successful in their job and they've left much to be desired at home. We pray that today they would leave encouraged to build into their home, to build into their family, inspiring every family here to become fully devoted followers of Jesus. May our homes be led well and may our church be led well and may our church be served well. It's in the name of Jesus that everybody agreed and said... Amen.