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## The Importance of Leadership — Lesson 1

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***Thesis:** Jesus Christ rules the universal church as Head, and He directs each local church through qualified shepherds—so the church can worship faithfully, stay protected, grow steadily, and remain anchored in truth.*

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### Lesson Targets (What This Lesson Must Accomplish)

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## Opening Truth

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The Lord did not design His people to drift.

He did not build His church to be driven by personalities, preferences, or whichever voice is loudest.

He did not leave His flock to guesswork.

He did not leave His bride to improvisation.

### **He gave a pattern.**

A revealed order that protects truth, strengthens unity, and keeps the work steady.

When the pattern is honored, the church becomes steadier.

When the pattern is neglected, the church becomes vulnerable—easy prey for confusion, division, and compromise.

Order is not the enemy of spirituality.

Order is the fruit of a God who is faithful, consistent, and holy.

A church without structure is not “free.”

It is exposed.

Leadership in the local church is simple at its core:

**Leadership is shepherding souls under Christ’s authority.**

*“But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”*

*(1 Corinthians 14:40, NASB 1995)*

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## 1) The Universal Church vs. the Local Church

### A) The Universal Church — One Body, One Head

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The universal church is the total body of the saved—every believer, in every place, across all time.

It does **not** operate like a worldwide organization with a headquarters, officers, and a human chain of command.

The universal church has one Head: **Jesus Christ**.

#### **Christ’s Absolute Authority (Universal Church)**

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#### **What this proves**

- No man is the head of the church.
- No council, denomination, or headquarters is authorized.

- No sponsoring-church structure is authorized.
- No human institution is given rule over local churches.

Christ rules by His Word:

*“God... has spoken to us in His Son...” (Hebrews 1:1–2, NASB 1995)*

*“...granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness...” (2 Peter 1:3, NASB 1995)*

### Clarity Note:

The **universal church** is the total body of the saved, made up of **individual Christians**, not “churches” as separate units.

A **local church** is a definite group of those saved individuals in a certain place, worshiping and working together under Christ’s authority.

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## B) The Local Church — A Visible Church Doing Work Together

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Local churches are not casual gatherings. They are **organized bodies of saints** in a definite place, assembling to worship God and to carry out the work Christ authorized.

A local church must be able to function as a body:

- worshiping together
- guarding holiness
- caring for needs
- supporting teaching and preaching
- staying faithful through discipline and doctrine

### Local Church Reality (What the New Testament Shows)

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## C) Why Leadership Is Necessary

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Order is not the enemy of spirituality.

Order protects the local church from being ruled by:

- feelings
- factions
- fear
- drifting standards
- opportunists

***“for God is not a God of confusion but of peace...”***

*(1 Corinthians 14:33, NASB 1995)*

Local churches require oversight because sheep are real—and wolves are real.

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## **D) What Happens When a Church Has No Elders?**

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When there is no qualified oversight, the church does not become “more spiritual.”

It becomes easier to push, easier to fracture, and easier to drift.

When leadership is weak or absent, the church commonly slides into:

- decision-making by pressure instead of Scripture
- unity held together by fear instead of conviction
- doctrine softened to avoid conflict
- discipline avoided to keep comfort
- spiritual problems ignored until they become disasters

The Bible gives a plain warning about what happens when everyone becomes their own authority:

***“In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”***

*(Judges 21:25, NASB 1995)*

Paul warned that when oversight fails, wolves do not wait politely outside:

***“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things...”***

*(Acts 20:29–30, NASB 1995)*

And the work of oversight is not small—it is about souls:

***“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account...”***

*(Hebrews 13:17, NASB 1995)*

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## **2) What Are Elders?**

### **A) One Office — Multiple Biblical Names**

The same men are described with different words, each showing a different emphasis of the same work.

#### **One Office, Three Names (Same Men, Same Work)**

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### **B) A Simple Definition**

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**Elders are qualified, proven men—recognized by the local church—who shepherd the flock and oversee the work according to Christ’s Word.**

They do not function as executives.

They do not exist to dominate.

They do not lead by pressure and threat.

They shepherd. They watch. They answer to God.

***“Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight...”***

*(1 Peter 5:2, NASB 1995)*

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### **3) Why Elders Must Be Biblically Grounded and Strong**

Eldership is not a trophy.

It is a weight.

It is not about status.

It is about souls.

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#### **A) Acts 15 — Serious Questions Require Sound Men**

When controversy arose concerning Gentile converts, leadership was required to weigh the matter and settle it by revealed truth.

##### **Acts 15 (Leadership Under Pressure)**

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#### **B) Acts 20:28–31 — Elders Must Guard the Flock**

Paul warned danger would come from outside and from within.

##### **Acts 20:28–31 (Elders as Watchmen)**

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## **C) Titus 1:9–11 — Elders Must Refute Error**

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Elders must be teaching men with backbone—men who can protect the church from false doctrine.

### **Titus 1:9–11 (Doctrine Defense)**

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## **D) Hebrews 13:17 — Souls Are the Measure**

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Elders are accountable to God. Oversight is not a privilege; it is stewardship.

### **Hebrews 13:17 (The Weight of Oversight)**

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## **4) The Boundaries of Elder Authority (Where Churches Drift)**

### **A) Elders Are Local, Not Universal**

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Elders do not oversee the brotherhood.

They do not direct other local churches.

They do not function as a regional board.

Oversight is local by design.

#### **Local Oversight Only (Church Autonomy)**

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##### **Autonomy Guardrail:**

No local church is authorized to oversee another church's work, funds, or decisions.

A local church may cooperate with other churches, but it may not take control of other churches.

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## **B) Elders Lead by Example — Not Domination**

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Elders are not authorized to lord over the church.

They are commanded to shepherd.

### **Shepherding Style (How Biblical Authority Works)**

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## **5) EVV 2026 — Faith in Action Leadership**

Faith in action leadership is not a title.

It is a life.

It is truth held steady, and obedience lived out.

### **Faith in Action Leadership (What Must Be Visible)**

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### **10 Thought-Provoking Questions (Leadership in the Local Church)**

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### **Take-Home Assignment (Faith in Action)**

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### **Case Studies (Oversight or Overreach?)**

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