

# OpenTheo

## Some Assembly Required - Organic Church Forum



### Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg, an experienced pastor and speaker, discussed the challenges associated with establishing churches and the value of an organic gathering of people without any formal leadership or creeds. In his talk, he emphasized the importance of unity over uniformity in an organic church setting and the dangers of institutionalization and politicalization of the church, which can lead to power struggles among leaders and a departure from the servant leadership model promoted by Jesus. He further argues that true spiritual leaders do not require a title, but rather should be recognized by the family and their adherence to the Word of God.

### Transcript

I appreciate being invited to speak here. I've never, I was unacquainted with this group, never been among you before, although I've met Keith and Wendy in their home church a couple of times, and I guess that's the connection that got me invited here. The topic that is entitled Some Assembly Required, as Keith mentioned in his introduction, there is a longer treatment of this material at my website, which is [thenarrowpath.com](http://thenarrowpath.com), and there's, under the topical lectures, there is, there's a lot of lectures there, as Keith said.

He was, he said there's literally thousands, not quite literally thousands, there's literally about nine hundred lectures at my website, but there are several hundred more of my lectures at other people's websites that aren't at my website. There's people who've recorded my lectures elsewhere, and they put them on their own website, so there's, I don't know how many of my lectures are on the web, but they are not available for sale. They're, you can just download them and listen to them.

But the series Some Assembly Required was actually a series of lectures I gave when I lived in Idaho, and I had, before I moved to Idaho, I was living in Oregon, and I was what we said, called between churches. Do you know that expression? I was between churches for several years. I got into trouble with a friend of mine who was a pastor, not, not serious trouble, but he thought I was not adequately involved in church, because I was between churches.

What actually had happened, I had been for all my life in churches, I'd been an elder in, you know, a number of churches in the past. I filled in as a interim pastor in a church for some time years ago. I've been in pastoral ministry a bit, and I've been in church all my life.

I was raised in a Baptist Church. I was converted as a child, and I've been in the ministry since I was 16. I actually began in the ministry here in Orange County, though I don't live in Orange County now, but I was going to Calvary Chapel from 1970, Calvary Chapel close to Mesa from 1970 to 74, and if you were around in those days, you know that was the beginning of something exciting that was going on, and that I eventually moved further north into Santa Cruz, and then further north into Oregon, then further north into Idaho, and then I worked my way back.

I'm in Santa Cruz again. Maybe this will be the next step back, but in Oregon, I ran a Bible college, if we could call it that, very small, you know, not many more students than we have in this room right now, but it was a nine-month program. I say a college because it wasn't, well, that was the level of training we had there, and we went through the whole Bible verse by verse in nine months with new batch of students, an international group of students every year.

I did that for 16 years, and it was during that time that I found myself between churches. I had been going to a church in McMinnville, Oregon, where our school was located, and they had a church split. This time, I wasn't the cause, thankfully.

I'm innocent of this. They had a split between older people and younger people in the church, and I was neither. I was middle-aged, but the older people who had been there forever and built the church, and then their children who were younger, we had a conflict in worship styles, and so forth.

The church split. They went two different ways, and I went with neither group. I was actually sympathetic toward the older group in some ways, but the younger people were more of my friends, and I just didn't want to alienate anyone, so I thought, we'll just look for another church, but about that time, the chaplain at George Fox University, which is near McMinnville, Oregon, it's in Newburgh, 15 miles away, called me and asked if I would like to fill a pulpit on the Oregon coast for a while, in a church that was just starting up.

It wasn't much bigger than this group, and they were meeting in some kind of a, like, in a little Oregon coastal town, and they wanted someone to come every other week to preach, and so I was available, and so every other Sunday, I made this two-hour trip to the coast to preach for these people. Well, when you're between churches, and every other week, you're driving two hours to preach in a church, it's hard to really get established in a new church in your own locality, so I was, you know, I wasn't worried about that, but some people were. Some people thought I'm not adequately churchied.

I don't have a, I'm not accountable to, you know, a legitimate church, and actually, during that time, because I used to play, I used to be a music minister, I don't do that much anymore, but when I was younger, I was. There was this Christian organization that wanted to manage unknown Christian music talent, and give them, get them booked in different churches, and so forth, and they wanted to work with me, and so I filled out an application for them, and they asked where, who my pastor was. Well, I didn't have a local pastor in my area, and so I gave the pastor of a church in California, who was good, my best friend, and who had been a pastor of mine years earlier, and they said, they got back to me, and said, there's a bit of a problem here.

You live in Oregon, and you said your pastor's pastoring a church in California. Don't you have a local church you go to? And I said, well, yes, I go to quite a few local churches, as a matter of fact. I go to several, and they said, well, but where are you accountable? I said, well, like all Christians, I'm accountable to God.

Doesn't the Bible say we'll all give account of ourselves to God? And he said, but what's your, what structure of accountability do you have locally? I said, well, I'm not sure what a structure of accountability is supposed to look like, but I lead a Bible school. We are in, we continue daily in the Apostles teaching, and fellowship, and prayers, and breaking bread, since the students all live together in a student community, and we pray together, we study the Word together, we eat together, we do everything together, and on Sundays, I even go to church somewhere, usually, even preaching once in a year. And they said, well, that's not, that's not good enough.

Do you need to have a pastor in your life? I thought, I said, well, I, I actually, twice a week, I meet for breakfast with two local pastors who are my friends. They said, that's not good enough. You have to join a church.

I said, listen, I have accountability every which way you look. I've got, I'm in fellowship every day. We hold a public meeting hours on Friday nights where I preach, and, and, and people from the community come.

I meet with pastors for, for breakfast twice a week. I preached every other week in a church, and I fellowship all over town. Now, what is it I'm lacking here? They said, you need to be a member of a church.

I said, do you mean that if you would be satisfied, if I just went to the biggest church in town, and became a regular part of that church, and the pastor didn't know me really at all, but I was there, you'd consider that I was adequately accountable because I was in a church. They said, well, that's about it. I said, well, I don't think we'll be working together.

Because that's not how I see church. And what happened is, because we didn't have a local church in our town, a friend of mine said, why don't we start meeting in a home?

And so I started meeting in his home. Well, I have a radio program, and I did even back then, this was back in the 90s.

And a number of people who heard my radio would say, where do you go to church? I said, well, I kind of go to a house church. And they said, can we go? So eventually, there are about 10 families going to this house church. And they were big families because they were homeschooling, you know, no birth control type families.

So it was a big church, only 10 families, big for a home. Well, we met like that for two years. And we had we had literally no structure.

And it was one of the best church experiences we'd ever had. We had no official leader. The people came there because they'd heard me on the radio, but I didn't lead the meetings.

We actually were hosted in another guy's house. I figured it's his house, let him host it. And all the heads of families were mature Christian men.

So it didn't make any sense to pick someone to lead them. It just seemed artificial. You know, you got you got 10 mature Christian couples.

And you know, if we said, well, let's pick out three to be the leaders. Well, that wouldn't that be kind of arbitrary? What would these three have going from that the other seven don't have going for just just be artificial. So we never thought of doing that never occurred to us.

We just had an all day meeting on Sundays where we ate a meal and sang songs together. And no one gave a sermon. And I'm a teacher.

I'm a full time teacher, but I never taught in that meeting one time. Because I taught all week, I didn't want to teach there too. And we just would have fellowship.

And typically, the women, of course, would, you know, get together and talk about the things they wanted to talk about. And the men would talk about things. But the men and women could be together, it was just so free, there was no, there's no structure.

And it was so edifying. And we got so bonded together that eventually, I closed the school in Oregon, I was invited to go out to teach regularly at a church in Idaho, near Grangeville, Idaho. And this was a church that had started as a home church also, where two men, heads of households had been going to a very legalistic church of a sort of an Anabaptist caste.

You know, I don't know if you've heard of charity, fellowship, it's okay, if you haven't, there are movement around the country, but they, they're, of course, homeschooling and, and that kind of a group, but they're, they're very legalistic about a lot of issues.

And these people have been going there, and all the women at that church had had to wear head coverings. Well, these two guys, their wives didn't wear head coverings.

And they're rather brazen about it. They just didn't, they didn't feel that was necessary. And they were, you know, pleased to not fit in that way.

They didn't, it's somewhat, they were being a little more rebellious than they should be. But they just, they just thought, maybe these people can accept us as we are or not. Well, they kind of felt like it was not.

And so they, they were talking, the two men were talking on a Saturday in one of their homes. And one of them was the postmaster of the town, and the other was just a rancher. And, and the rancher said to the postmaster, or postmaster said to the rancher, he said, where are you going to church tomorrow? And the rancher said, I'm coming here to have church with you in your house.

And so, so these two families arrived, but not only them, before morning, several other families heard about it. There were like four or five families the first day, and then it grew bigger to 10, 12 families. Eventually, there were too many families.

And so they eventually rented a little chapel at a, at a Christian campground nearby. And they met there and there were other house churches around that heard about it. And they wanted to fellowship together too.

So all these house churches got together this, this meeting on Sundays. And that was the group that invited me to come and be a part of them. Well, it was really great.

The church had no name, no creed, just the Bible, no official leadership, no building, you know, no staff. It was just an organic gathering of people. All of them had been in house churches, and now it was like five or six house churches now in one building.

And they, they were really great. I mean, there was, the chapel had a box in the back for offerings, but it didn't belong to these people. It was, it belonged to the chapel at this campground, but people would put money in it.

And a lot of money, because these people didn't have anywhere else to give their, their gifts. And so they'd take the money and all the brothers would get together on Tuesday nights to decide what should be done with the money. It was always to help someone who's poor in the group, all the money went to help the poor.

One of the most wonderful things that happened there was that one of the young families had moved to the area and they just had enough money to buy a bare piece of land, but they had no house. So they're living in a camp trailer with their three kids. And so one weekend, the whole church, everyone went up to their property and built a house for them.

And with the church funds that had come in, they, there's like an Amish barn raising. You know, they, in one weekend, the wall, they'd laid the foundation before, before the church people arrived. So, you know, the guy and some others had built a foundation and we all went up there and raised a house in one weekend.

And it was a cute house. And, and the man who lived in it was able to fix it up inside more afterwards, but we got it, you know, dried in and stuff. So that was just a really great church.

All the money went to paying the rent or the mortgage for people who didn't have enough. And it was a depressed area. I love that place.

But what happened, this series on some assembly required came out of my teaching there. Actually, you know, the 10 families in Oregon that I was meeting with? When I told them I was moving to Idaho, they moved there too. Seven of the 10 families uprooted and went to Idaho also.

That might make me seem like a cult leader. I didn't invite them. And they didn't live in a, they didn't live on a compound with me.

The church was scattered over a whole county, Idaho County, which is the size of the state of New Jersey. But the whole county has 15,000 people in it. So 15,000 people spread over a county the size of New Jersey and these people spread all over the place.

But they'd all come together on Sundays. And my friends who moved from Oregon, they all got property wherever they could get it. So they were spread out too.

We didn't see each other any more often than we saw the other people in the church pretty much. But we were all there. And this, the reason this series arose is because somebody, well, there was always somebody coming along saying, you know, this church has been together for three years, there's 150 people in it.

And we don't even have any leaders. We don't even have a statement of faith. We don't even have a name.

It's embarrassing when people say, where do you go to church? We just say, well, we go to the church down there at that campground. And so people were always trying to pressure some people within the group. But they were usually being pressured from people outside who are critical.

Well, you don't have a real church until you have membership and tithing and, you know, leaders, elders, and so forth. And so this was always coming up, you know, should we get more, what I would say, institutional. And since I was teaching every Tuesday night, I decided to teach a series to discourage that trend.

And that series was some assembly required. Now, that is a lot of hours of lecture. And I've already used up 15 minutes in my hour here.

So I've given you these notes, because they have, as you can see, there's a lot of points on both sides of the sheet. And there's a lot of scriptures. And I will not be looking at all of those here.

We do talk about all those scriptures and look them up in the in the lecture series. But just to kind of go quickly as a light, a light touch the whole topic. We are probably all aware of the difference, at least some of the differences between the primitive church in Jerusalem described in Acts chapters two through four, or through five, and church as we know it today.

I mean, I think we in this room, especially because you people are part of the Orange County Organic Church form, I assume, or at least you're here because you have some interest or some awareness of alternative ideas about what church is supposed to be. And usually, people get interested in that because they become aware for something they just realize, wait a minute, churches, I've been doing it. The only way I've known of church in America has been a certain way.

But I read in the book of Acts, it's not really that way at all. I read in the epistles of Paul, it's not that way at all. How come? How do we get here from there? And it's important that we look at that.

Because if we're not, if you're not among those who have given this consideration before, you typically are likely to read the book of Acts chapters two through four, and just kind of wedge it into the paradigm of church you already know. Typical of this is when people and you hear preachers say this on the radio all the time, Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. The Bible makes no reference to Timothy or anybody else being a pastor of a church.

There's no church in the New Testament that had a pastor as far as we can tell from what the Bible says. It doesn't ever talk about a church having a pastor. When the churches had official leaders, they were called elders and there were several in each congregation.

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every congregation on their first missionary journey. And of course we know from the book of Titus that Paul wrote to Titus and said that he should appoint elders in every congregation on the island of Crete where there were Christians. Timothy also was apparently involved in appointing elders, also in a church that had been in longstanding in Asia and in Ephesus.

Though there does appear to be evidence that there were churches in Paul's time where he didn't even appoint any leaders. And even John, when John writes third John, he writes

about diatrophies, who loves to have the preeminence and you know don't follow his example, follow Demetrius, he's got a good report with everybody, be like him. It's like John doesn't say just obey the pastor or just over the elders.

He talks about individuals in the church who have some kind of visibility. He says, this is a good guy to follow. This is not a good guy to follow.

It would be, it seems like it'd be so simple just to say, I, you know, Demetrius is your pastor, diatrophies is a heretic, you know, but they didn't do that. Now that did begin to happen in the second century. We see evidence of that in the letters of Ignatius because Ignatius, by the time he wrote about 115 to 120 AD, the churches in his area, at least, all had what they called a bishop.

And he said, you know, you can't baptize without the bishop present, you can't have marriage ceremonies, you can't take communion, you can't do much of anything without the bishop present. Now the word bishop in the New Testament, we have it in the King James Version and some other versions, the word bishop, that's the word episkopos, which means overseer, a P in the Greek is over, skopos, you could guess what skopos means, C, like telescope, microscope, skopos. Episkopos means an overseer.

Unfortunately, since the King James Version was translated by Anglicans or Congregationalists in England, they, the leader of the church they knew was a bishop, the guy with the pointy hat. And so when the translators translated the King James, they came to the word episkopos, they used the word bishop, which sounds very ecclesiastical, whereas the word overseer sounds more functional, you know, someone who's looking over things, who's keeping an eye on things. But the word overseer or episkopos in Paul's writings and in Peter's, also Peter uses it too in 1 Peter 5, is used interchangeably with the word elder.

That is, the elders were overseers, the overseers were elders, and that's, there was only one office, if we could even call it an office. And that was, there was one kind of recognized leaders in the local churches, and that were the, those were the men who were called elders and overseers. There were multiple in each church, there was never a church in the New Testament that we ever know about that had one man who was the bishop, the overseer, the elder, the pastor, and somebody said, doesn't the Bible say that the Lord gave some pastors to the church? In Ephesians 4.11, he gave some apostles, some apostles, excuse me, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

Yeah, that's the only place in the New Testament where the word pastor is used of anyone other than Jesus or a regular shepherd of real sheep. The word pastor, poimen in the Greek, means a shepherd, and Jesus is called the great poimen, the great shepherd, and of course the guys who heard the angels sing about Jesus at his birth in Bethlehem, they were shepherds, they're called poimen also. The Bible mostly uses the word to



speak of men who actually lead livestock, and then secondly, Jesus.

And one time the noun is used of church leaders, and it's only in Ephesians 4.11 where it says he gave some pastors or he gave some shepherds. Now it doesn't say how many per flock here, how many per congregation, but we know from what Paul said in Acts chapter 20, when he called the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet with him at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, his final trip there, he said to them, shepherd the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. That is, you elders are bishops, overseers, and he says shepherd, it's the verb form of poimen, you know, be the shepherd, be the pastor.

So the elders were doing the pastoral work, and there were several of them in each congregation, we don't know of a group that had one. Now why do people say Timothy was a pastor? Well, because the things that Timothy was told to do are things that in our modern churches, pastors are thought to, you know, the senior pastor is supposed to do supposedly. Timothy was an apostle, and apostles were rather unusual.

They weren't, you know, they weren't stationary local leaders. Sometimes they settled in an area for a while. Paul, for example, settled in Corinth for 18 months and in Ephesus for about three years, but he was still, he didn't belong to one location.

He was, he belonged to the whole church, and so did Timothy. Timothy is called an apostle in First Thessalonians, and to call him a pastor is to not really quite recognize what his real role was in the early church. But in the local churches, when they appointed leaders at all, they were called elders, and there were elders in every church, elders plural.

Remember when James says, is any sick among you, let him call for the elders, plural, of the church, singular, and let them pray over them, anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord, and so forth. That's typical. In fact, in Philippians 1.1, why don't we look at Philippians 1.1 just for a moment.

This is an interesting thing that I noticed some years ago, actually back in the 70s. It's been a while. In Philippians 1.1, how Paul addresses this letter to the Philippians, he says, Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.

Why didn't he say hello to the pastor? Isn't that rude of him? He writes to all the saints and their deacons and their overseers, their elders, but he doesn't even say hi to the pastor. What's wrong? Because there was no pastor there except for the overseers themselves. The elders are the pastors.

They do the pastoral work. Not only did Paul say that to the elders of Ephesus in Acts chapter 20, but Peter said the same in 1 Peter 5. When he begins that chapter, the

elders who are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and partaker of the glory that shall follow. He says, shepherd the flock of God, taking the oversight of it.

Again, he refers to the elders as the overseers, the shepherds. In the early churches, there were men, in most churches, who provided some form of leadership. They could be called elders, which in presbyteroi in the Greek just means an old man.

It's actually the ordinary word for an old man. Whenever you want to talk about an old man, you use presbyteros. That's what they called the leaders of the church.

They were probably just some of the men who had seniority. They were older. They were more mature.

People would look to them like older brothers. Remember, it is like older brothers, not like fathers. Remember when Jesus said to his disciples, don't call anyone father.

Don't call anyone teacher. You have one father who's in heaven. You have one teacher, the Christ.

You are all brothers. He said that to the apostles. You're just all brothers.

That's all. This is just a family. This is not a religious hierarchy here.

This is a family, everybody's brothers and sisters. You don't call somebody by some kind of reverend or whatever. The show I do on the radio is a Bible question and answer show.

Back in the 70s, when I was in Orange County, not only did Walter Martin start a program like that, but another man whose name I will not give started a program like that. He had eight earned degrees. He was a very knowledgeable man.

He wrote many books, some of which I've read with profit. He's written good books. He's quite a scholar.

I never met the man, although I've heard from people who went on tours with him. He was a little cranky. I think he was because he had a show sort of like Walter Martin's Bible Answering Show in the 70s.

People would call up and they'd say, hello, brother so-and-so. He'd say, that's doctor so-and-so. He said, I spent a lot of time to earn these degrees.

I have the right to be called doctor. That's when I changed the channel. Don't let anyone call you rabbi or doctor, or certainly reverend is a strange title to call a human being, and yet we do.

Now, I'm not legalistic about that. I mean, if somebody, if a pastor used to be calling

pastor so-and-so, I'll call him pastor so-and-so. I don't think it's going to go to his head.

I mean, it's just a polite way that people talk to him, but that's not really what the early church was like. Some of the churches apparently didn't have any appointed leaders at all. Like I mentioned, the church that had Diotrephes and Demetrius in it that John wrote to in 3 John, there apparently were no official leaders in that church at all.

In the Thessalonian church, when Paul wrote to them in 1 Thessalonians 5, around verse 12, he said, remember, honor those who take the lead among you. And he said, respect them for their work's sake, not for their office. You don't salute a uniform, not the position they hold, but for their work's sake, esteem them highly for their work's sake.

I'll give the verse numbers because I'm just kind of paraphrasing there, and it's much better to give you the actual words. 1 Thessalonians 5, 12, he says, we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. So there were older Christians, not very much older in Thessalonica because Paul had just done his evangelism there initially a few weeks before he wrote this.

He was only there for three weeks before he got run out of town. And so there were three-week-old Christians, but even among them, there were some who were more mature, probably some who had maybe a Jewish background, knew the law better, more familiar with the scripture, maybe the older people. But these people were like organic leaders in the group.

They didn't have an office, it would appear. They just did a work. They served.

They served as leaders. And this is the important thing to think, because when the church becomes institutionalized, it becomes political, and the leaders become political. And in the early church, Jesus said, it shall not be that way among you.

Jesus said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise authority over them, but it shall not be done that way among you. He said that he who would be chief among you must be the slave and the servant of all. So the persons who were the leaders weren't the ones who were giving orders.

They were the ones who were serving and setting the best example. And for example, look at 1 Corinthians chapter 16. Paul wrote more pages to the Corinthians than to anybody else that we know of.

Not only two long epistles that are available, he wrote at least one other epistle that's not in our Bible. He alludes to it in 1 Corinthians 5, 9. He mentions an earlier epistle that we don't have. So he wrote at least three, and some think there was another epistle between the two we have.

There could have been as many as four epistles. This church received a lot of letters and writing from Paul, but one of the strange things is he never mentions the leaders in the church. That is, he didn't ever mention elders or overseers of that church.

And that would have been a good place to do it because, you know, they were a troubled church. And one of their biggest troubles was divisions among them. I mentioned that Ignatius in the second century had written letters to seven churches, and he always mentions the bishop.

Don't do anything without the bishop present. Now that might sound very controlling. It sounds kind of creepy controlling to me, but the reason he gave was because there were divisions in those churches.

That is, Ignatius was saying the church is seeing divisions. There's false teachers. There's division going on.

People disagree with each other. And so he said, here's the solution. Submit to the bishop.

Now that's the way churches think you're supposed to fix things if there's division, if there's disagreement, because people don't like disagreement. Remember Keith said, but when he's introducing me, he kind of likes to not be around people who are all just like him. But not everyone likes that.

It's threatening. You don't think what I think? Well, I'll find some more people who do because I don't feel real comfortable around people who don't think like I do. They might be right.

If they are, I sure don't want to find out because I might have to change my mind about something. And so the carnal way to deal with division in the church, and many pastors have done this over the years, they say, we're going to have unity in this church. That means everyone does what I say.

Everyone conforms to me. And that's what Ignatius apparently was recommending. Now, Paul wrote to the Corinthians and they had divisions.

And he never said submit to the bishop, submit to the elders. As far as we know, the church didn't even have elders. He never mentions them.

What does he say to do? He says, recognize that you all belong to Christ. You're all one body. You're different from each other.

Hands and feet and eyes and nose are different from each other, but they all need each other. You don't just bring conformity in order to have unity. Unity is not the same as uniformity.

Unity is loving people, even in a non-homogeneous group of people. And love is spiritual. Authoritarian control is carnal.

And it's easier to do the carnal thing because by nature it's easier to be carnal than spiritual. So it's easier to say, listen, if you guys aren't going to agree with me, why don't you go start your own church? And we'll just keep meeting over here with the people who agree with me. Instead, and that's why we have 4,000 denominations now, certainly more than that, really, but that's a lot.

There shouldn't be. Now, I realize that some groups are truly heretical enough that they probably went out from us because they were not of us. Yet not everything is that heretical.

If people believe in infant baptism or believer baptism, certainly one of those groups is wrong. But are they wrong in a way that they're not our brothers anymore and that we just can't fellowship with them, can't love them anymore? Why? What's so threatening about that? Let them baptize our infants if they want. We'll baptize our believers if that's what we're believing.

And who cares what someone thinks about when the rapture is going to be or what the secrets of the mysteries of predestination are or even how a person explains the Trinity. The Bible never explains the Trinity. Why do we make it an issue that people have to explain the same way we do or else they belong somewhere else? These are not the issues that people in the early church fellowshiped under.

Now, of course, in the early church in Jerusalem, they all had the same doctrine. They all had the same teachers. The apostles were teaching everybody.

But once the church spread out all over the world, they didn't have the luxury of having an apostle in every church, and they had to learn to get along. And Paul would write to the Corinthians, and they've got divisions, and they've got all kinds of carnality. That's a place that's just rife for a solution like Ignatius had.

Paul should have just said, I'm sending one of my guys in there. I'm sending one of my lieutenants in there, and he's going to rule this church with an iron hand until all these problems are solved. And everyone would submit to him.

Paul didn't do that. You know what he said? Look at 1 Corinthians 16 and verse 15. He says, I urge you, brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia.

Now, Achaia is the southern Greek peninsula, and that's where Corinth was. And he's saying, the household of Stephanas, they were the first Christians there. They were the first ones who got saved in that area.

And they're the oldest Christians in the church, in other words. He says, now they are the first fruits of Achaia. He says that they have devoted themselves to serving the saints.

Your translation might say the ministry of the saints. The word ministry means service. Yeah, they have devoted themselves to servanthood.

These are the oldest Christians in your church, and they are servant minded people. What's he say? He says that you must also submit to such as these, and to everyone who works and labors with us. Now, in other words, if Paul sends someone in to do stuff, they should submit to him.

But he says, you've got the household of Stephanas right there. They're a mature Christian family. They are servant hearted.

Jesus said, the chief among you is one who is a servant of all. These people qualify. Submit to people like that.

He doesn't say, and Stephanas, I'm appointing to be the bishop. He didn't give the man an office. They were supposed to just recognize this man was doing what mature Christians do.

He's a good example. You should let him give you a clue how to be mature. The idea was not that there was a daddy and children in the church.

God is the daddy, and everyone else is the children. But among the children of the large family, there are older and younger children. And in many cases, the younger children are smart enough to recognize that their older brother or brothers sometimes have more experience.

I often think when I use this illustration of a family, I know an Italian family that I knew in Santa Cruz years ago, a big Italian family, and all the kids are adults. But the family was tight, and they'd get together as a family to kind of, I guess, decide things that affected them as a family. They're much more tight or knit than most American culture families are.

And the dad was gone. The dad had left the family years earlier, so there were some older brothers. And in the family councils, because I sat in on some of these because I was good friends with the family, the older brothers would often be the ones who made decisions about how they're going to solve a problem.

Now, no one in the family was obligated to do what they said. They didn't hold some kind of official rank or office, but they were respected. They were men who had successful lives, successful marriages.

They exhibited wisdom in their past, and the younger members of the family said, you

know, they just kind of listened to those people. And that's what I think Christian leadership was in the early church initially. I don't think they had political officers in the churches.

Even when they appointed elders, the word appointment, I think, speaks of a recognition of them. And I think they did it when they saw a need for it. Now, in Corinth, apparently, Paul apparently didn't feel there were enough mature Christians in Corinth.

Remember, he told them how carnal and how babes they were in Christ. I don't think he felt like he could appoint an eldership in that church. But he knew one family that he could trust, but he's not going to make that one guy the leader of the church.

One man leadership was not what Paul had in mind for a church. So he just said, see him, see his family, look how they are. They serve the saints.

They're devoted to serving the saints. When you see people like that submit to people like that, that's a totally different kind of submission than a political, hierarchical, top-down kind of a authority structure, which later developed, of course, obviously, in the second century. And when that did, the church became institutionalized.

Now, there's so many different things in my notes that I won't be able to get to. That's why I gave them to you. I knew I wouldn't.

But I would like to point out something. If you look at the back side of the sheet, Roman numeral four. This, for many years, even before I was thinking about this particular application of the church, I've done a lot of thinking about the period of the judges and the period of the kings.

Because after Moses died, and he had been the undisputed leader of Israel, he was the prophet, that God raised up to deliver them from Egypt, and he led them through his whole life. Then he appointed Joshua as his successor. But after Joshua died, there was no successor.

Joshua didn't appoint someone to take over the lead from him after he died. Why? I guess God didn't tell him to. God did tell Moses before he died, put your hands on Joshua, some of your authority I'll put on him, and he'll lead the people into the promised land.

Once they got into the promised land, no other leaders were appointed. Joshua died and left a power vacuum. Sounds very sloppy.

Sounds very bad. And that began the 380 or more years that we call the judges. The book of Judges talks about that.

And what was that characterized by? It was characterized by, well, twice in the book of

Judges it says what? There was no king in Israel in those days, and what happened? Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Now, every time I've heard a quote that verse, they talk like that's a bad thing. Pastors don't want people to do what's right in their own eyes.

They want them to do what's right in the pastor's eyes. There was no king in Israel, so everyone followed their own conscience. Boy, is that dangerous.

Well, it is kind of dangerous. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty, and liberty is a dangerous thing because people can make mistakes, and boy, they did. In the period of the judges, the Israelites lapsed into worshipping false gods, but you know, they had a king.

He just wasn't on earth. God was their king, and he took care of things. When they went into apostasy, you know what he did? He brought in oppressors, and they got oppressed, and they got judged, and then what did they do? They cried out to God.

They repented. They got right with God again, and he'd raise up a charismatic leader to simply lead them into battle to drive out the enemies, and that leader would serve as a judge for the rest of his life, and when he died, no successor, and the cycle would go again. Eventually, people lapsed off in the wrong behavior again.

God would send in judgment. God knows how to manage his household. Brings them to repentance.

He raises up another charismatic leader who leads them to victory, and he serves as judge. But then, of course, the last of these judges was Samuel, and in his day, in 1 Samuel chapter 8, we read that the leaders, the elders of Israel came to Samuel, and they said, Samuel, you're old, and your sons are certainly not worthy to succeed you, and we're kind of tired of this history of, you know, punctuated by apostasy and judgment and so forth. Why don't you just give us a king to rule over us like all the nations have? Now, this had been suggested earlier, you might recall, in the time of the judges.

In Judges chapter 8, Gideon, who was one of the judges, had delivered the people of Israel from the Midianites as a, you know, he's the charismatic leader who rose up and delivered the people in that time. And in chapter 8 of Judges, in verses 22 and 23, the people said to Gideon, rule thou over us, you and your son and your son's sons, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said, I will not rule over you, nor will my son or my son's son rule over you.

The Lord will rule over you. Now, this is interesting because what were they suggesting? A dynasty. They're suggesting an institutional leadership.

They're saying we've had these judges that God just raises up whenever he wants to,



these leaders, and they end up kind of judging us from God's law by their innate spiritual qualifications because God's the one who raises them up and they don't have any theological training, they don't hold an office, they just provide service as judges. What do judges do? They run, they administrate at a court. Well, what laws did they administrate? God's law.

When the judges were judging Israel, people would come to them and say, you know, this guy wronged me. And so the judge would look in the law and say, well, the law of God said you give him four times as much for what you damaged of his property. And, you know, the judge would do that.

He wasn't a king. He wasn't making laws. He was simply a magistrate of administrating God's laws.

And he was there because God raised him up, not because he had special law training or theological training or whatever. He was just a man that God raised up and that's how he was the leader. But then they said to Gideon, let's do something different.

Let's make you our king and your sons and your sons' sons and, you know, Gideon dynasty in Israel. And Gideon said, no way that's not going to happen here. God is your king.

You're the kingdom of God. Now, later in Samuel's day, when the people said, Samuel, make us a king to rule over us. You know, you might say, well, I think I'd be on their side about this.

You know, the period of the judges was pretty bad and they had a lot of bad things going on. Maybe it's just get yourself a good king. Well, yeah, if you get yourself a good king and you never have a bad one, the problem is once you make a king, you got a king generation after generation after generation.

And as we know from Israel's history, they are mostly bad ones. And when the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, give us a king to rule over us, he went and he prayed. This is in first Samuel eight verses four through seven.

He went and he prayed and God said, Samuel, don't be grieved. Go ahead and give them the king. They want, don't, don't feel bad.

They have not rejected you. They have rejected me that I should not rule over them. Now, it's clear that God was not happy about this over in Hosea chapter 13.

The prophet is reflecting back on this. God is speaking. He says, I gave you a king in my anger and I took him away in my wrath.

God didn't like them having a king. It wasn't his idea. Why? Because he was their king.

They're not rejecting you, Samuel. They're rejecting me that I should not reign over them. And I often ponder this.

Well, what's the difference between a judge and a king? God apparently wasn't opposed to them having judges. And these judges provided some kind of leadership. So what's the big difference with them having a king? What's the big crisis here? Well, the difference is this.

The period of the judges was a time where God as king raised up leaders, you know, as he wished, when he wanted them. And when they died, they didn't have an official leader until God raised up another one. When you start a king, you've got an institutional authority.

And the office outlives the officer. Now, that's a dangerous situation. When you've got an office that has a life of its own.

You see, in God's kingdom, God's kingdom is led by spiritual people. An institutional church or an institutional government is led by institutional offices. Now, once you've got an office, then any kind of person can be in that office and he has de facto authority because he's in the office.

The authority is in the office. You salute the uniform. He's got the badge.

Well, what if he's corrupt? Well, that happens. When I was at this church in Idaho before I gave this series of lectures, one of the guys who had headed up a home church that joined in our coalition of home churches there, he called me during the week. He respected me because I taught there and he thought I had some influence there.

We didn't have any official leaders, so I wasn't an official leader. I just taught more than most people, but there were a lot of people who taught there. He called me during the week.

He said, Steve, I'm really concerned our church doesn't have any elders. I said, why? Do you see a problem? He said, well, not yet. He said, what if wolves come to try to tear up the flock? Then we need to have elders, he said, to protect the sheep.

I said, well, what if we appoint elders and they turn out to be the wolves? That's what happened. That's what happened in church history, isn't it? As soon as you had the church institutionalized so that you all had officers, bishops, and the Bishop of Rome was the main officer over the rest, what happened? Before very long, the wolves were the bishops and they destroyed the church for a thousand years, at least in the Middle Ages. Whenever someone rose up as an alternative movement, like the Waldensians, or the Paulicians, or some of these other groups, the Hussites and the Lollards who followed Wycliffe, those other groups, this was all before the Reformation.

During the time when the Catholic church dominated Europe, these groups would rise up and they were pretty much like we are. They just wanted to follow the Bible. They didn't really respect the papal authority and so forth.

What happened? Well, the church started the Inquisition and they hunted these people down and burned up the stake, stretched it on the rack, cut their heads off, did everything they could to wipe them out. The only reason that Luther succeeded where the others before him failed is that his movement happened after the printing press was invented. They couldn't get rid of all the paper.

They could hunt down individual meetings in homes, which is what the Waldensians and the Paulicians were having at various times in the Roman Catholic era. They could hunt these people down and kill them all, but once you've got a printing press running off hundreds of thousands of pamphlets and spreading Europe with it, it doesn't do any good to kill Luther. His words are everywhere and there's millions of people believe in what he said and suddenly the Roman Catholic church lost control of Europe because of the printing press.

And they still think that was a bad thing. Now, there is some evidence that bad things happen and my Catholic friends, and I have many of them, point out, you know, ever since Luther the church, look at the Protestant church, there's all thousands of denominations, it's all divided. Before that the church was one.

No, the church was usually two. There was the institutional church and then there were the real Christians meeting offside trying not to get caught. The church was two.

Since Luther, yeah, that's right. After Luther what happened was there's a whole bunch of above ground churches, but all of them institutional too. And all of them making the same mistakes, at least some of the same mistakes, the Roman Catholic church made.

Luther, he got out from under the Pope, but when the Anabaptist movement came and they wanted to stop baptizing their babies and start baptizing all the believers, Luther believed in hunting those people down too. Calvin was in the second generation of the Reformation. He believed in hunting them down.

He wanted to burn heretics. Michael Servetus was a heretic. I think we would agree he was a heretic, but he loved the Lord.

He was a heretic in the sense that his doctrines were not orthodox, but he loved Jesus. Calvin had him burned at the stake. A reformer.

Zwingli, who started the Reformation in Switzerland, burned 4,000 or drowned 4,000 Anabaptists who were what we call Mennonites today or Amish, peaceful people. People just want to live simple Christian life and obey the Sermon on the Mount. That's all they wanted to do.

The Swiss reformer Zwingli, he had 4,000 of them killed. The founders of that movement were his former students, young men that he had been teaching Greek to earlier when they were good reformed people like him. Because they were reading in the Greek and reading the New Testament, they started believing their infant baptism didn't count, so they wanted to get baptized as believers.

When they did that, Zwingli turned against them. You see, there's a monster here. It's not called Roman Catholicism.

It's called institutionalized religion. Jesus didn't start institutionalized religion. Jesus came to establish a family under a father.

The family doesn't have to be 100% homogeneous. People can believe different from each other and still be brothers and sisters and still love each other. You know that if you have brothers and sisters and you get together for Thanksgiving.

You know that some of them may be political liberals, some may be political conservatives, some may be Christians, some may be non-Christian. Some of them may have totally different opinions about lots of social issues. You argue with them and you try to convince them and they try to convince you, but when it's all said and done, you still sit down and eat turkey together.

That's what a family is like. I don't agree with everybody. I don't say, well, let's just kiss and make nice.

I say, let's fight, but let's fight as brothers. I mean, let's argue. If I think you're wrong, I want to tell you why.

You tell me why you think I'm wrong. I've been enough to handle it. My identity is not in my opinions.

My identity is in Christ. So if you damage my opinions, you haven't hurt me. You've helped me.

If my opinions are wrong and you show me they're wrong, you've done me a big favor. When we want to argue, we're arguing with the mind that we both love the truth. We just have a different opinion of what it is.

And after our argument, if we still disagree, so what? We disagreed before. We disagreed now. We don't have to change our opinion of each other.

We just realize that there's more conversations to be had. And you know what I liked about this group in Idaho? Because there was no statement of faith in the group, and this bothered a lot of people. We refused to have a statement of faith.

We said, well, if you believe that Jesus is Lord and you believe the Bible is the authority,

you're one of us. And there were like 17 different guys who filled the pulpit there. Three of us did most often.

Probably two out of three Sundays, one of us three would be in the pulpit on Sunday morning. But the other one out of three Sundays, someone else would be there. Just another head of one of the households in the church.

And boy, there were some strange things taught there. I mean, there were Calvinists and non-Calvinists. There were dispensationalists.

There were reformed. There were amillennial, postmillennial, premillennial. There were charismatic, non-charismatic, anti-charismatic.

There were Plymouth brethren. There was everything in that group. And you know what? Everyone just loved each other.

They weren't looking to start a group where everyone was homogenous in their beliefs. They wanted to start a group that reflected the fact that they were all family. And it was funny because from Sunday to Sunday, you'd hear from time to time something that at least half the church would disagree with.

And everyone just didn't complain. They knew, well, that's what he believes. That's okay.

Next week, we'll have someone else say something different. But see, all the heads of households figured that they were training their children at home with what they believed. They didn't have to depend on what came from the pulpit.

These people were not pulpit dependent. They got together to hear what each person thought maybe the Lord had to say to the group. And sometimes at least half the people thought, well, that isn't what the Lord had to say.

We had one Pentecostal guy there who thought you have to speak in tongues. And by the way, I speak in tongues, but I don't speak in tongues very often. I certainly don't do it in public.

But I certainly don't believe someone has to speak in tongues. I have a biblical view. But this Pentecostal guy, he was a little imbalanced, I have to say.

He was just an old farmer, woodsman, hunter type guy. And sadly, his family later broke up and he committed suicide. He actually stabbed himself with a hunting knife in the chest.

Unstable guy. But before any of that was seen, like years before that happened, he was a Pentecostal zealot and he wanted to preach one Sunday. So sure, he got up and he preached a sermon about how you have to speak in tongues.

Now, what's the interesting thing is that no one else in the church believed what he was saying, but no one was bothered by it. That's Monty. That's how he feels about it.

It's okay. He can think that if he wants to. No one was threatened.

No one walked out. They just knew we don't all have to agree about these things here. We agree about one thing and that Jesus is Lord and we're governing our lives and families according to the word of God as we understand.

And if you got someone up there who's saying things that are truly dangerous, even then people wouldn't walk out. We had a brother's meeting on Tuesdays and we'd all talk it out. You know how decisions were made about how money was spent in the church and stuff like that by everybody? I will say all the heads of households.

Women here might wonder why it'd be just the heads of household, but in those families, they believed that the husband was the head of the household and so the wives were willing to let their husbands decide for the family on that. But I wouldn't have objected if husbands and wives were all there in the forum, but the wives apparently didn't mind. And so every guy in the church would get together, or at least everyone who wanted to.

It'd be announced and said, we're going to meet on Tuesday. We're going to make a decision about such and such. Anyone who wants to come, come.

And we wouldn't do anything unless everyone agreed on what to do. If we didn't have consensus, we figured, well, the Lord hasn't spoken to us yet about it, you know, and we'll just not do anything yet about this. I mean, it was, I'll tell you, that's the greatest church I've ever been in.

And it was absolutely non-institutional. And the reason I gave my series called Some Assembly Recorder was to keep them from going the direction of institutional. But anyway, let me talk to you about here, the difference between the kings and the judges briefly, as it applies to the church.

This is essentially defining of how the church got institutionalized. When you have institutionalized authority, when it becomes a political thing, okay, and the authorities are the bosses, the rulers, and so forth. And this is true, whether you've got a pastor, whether you've got a priest, whether you've got elders, no matter what you have, if they're political, you've got an institutional church.

So what do I mean by political? Well, under Roman numeral four that I have some points to make. Institutional authority in here is in the office, not the character or the correctness of the office holder. I've already mentioned that.

That's what, to my mind, defines institutionalism. You've got an office that outlives the office holder. You don't have an office that's recognized because God has raised up

somebody who's qualified and who God is using that way.

And you say, oh, that's an elder there for sure. And that guy over there, he's certainly an elder because he's a mature Christian. His family's in order.

He's apt to teach. He's got a good report with those who are out. He meets the qualifications of an elder.

So he's one of the elders. We don't have to put a badge on him or a sign on his door, elder so and so, like the Mormons have to put those badges on, Elder Smith, Elder Jones, because they're only 19 years old. No one would know they're elders.

You have to put a badge on him that says elder because no one would guess. That they're elders if they didn't have a badge that said so. But there are some pastors like that too.

You wouldn't know they were a spiritual leader unless they had the title pastor. When you see how they live, how they spend their money, how their family is, you just wouldn't think, that's a pastor? Well, so you have to have an institutional authority. I mean, we shouldn't.

I don't believe the church should, but this is what happened. As soon as you had an office, you've got, you know, you got to put someone in that office. You need bylaws to tell you how to elect someone to fit in that office.

And then when he gets disqualified or dies or something like that, there's a vacancy. Now when the judges died, there wasn't a vacancy. There was no one in it because there's nothing, there's no in to be in.

There was no office. God raised up a man, a gifted man, Samson, Gideon, you know, Ehud, whoever, and used him for whatever he had to be done with. And then when he died, it was over.

There's no office. There wasn't, okay, who are we going to elect to take his office? Nobody. God's in office still.

God's still king. God will raise up leaders as he wishes. You can call them something if you want to or not.

Because every group of Christians, if they're truly God's children, will recognize that within their midst, there are some people that everyone recognizes. They know something that many of us don't know. They're mature.

Their family is an example, but I want my family to follow. You don't have to give them titles necessarily. Now it's okay because Paul sometimes did recognize elders in every town.

And I think that the reason for that was like it says in Titus, when Paul tells Titus to appoint elders in all the cities in Crete, he says, because, what? Why did he have to do that? He says in verse 10, for there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things that they ought not for the sake of dishonest gain. Now when you've got a church that's got a lot of new converts in it, and people don't know right from wrong, they didn't have Bibles to read. They didn't have printed Bibles in those days.

Not everyone knew the Bible. They couldn't check things out. They listened to whoever is the loudest talker.

And if the loudest talker is a guy who's insubordinate to the apostles and who's an idle talker who leads people into circumcision and, you know, in another religion, really, into leading people away from Christ. Remember what Paul said to the Galatians, so you who get circumcised, you're under the whole law now. You're estranged from Christ.

You've fallen from grace. You can't do this circumcision thing and still be Christian, Paul said to the Galatians. You've estranged yourself from Christ.

So when you've got someone who's actually leading the church astray, now there might be some good men in the church who know better, but maybe they're not as loud. Maybe they're not as quick to speak. But Paul says, you find those men who are trustworthy and you point them out to the people.

Let them know these are the ones the apostles recognize as reliable men you can listen to. That doesn't mean they become the party bosses. It doesn't mean they become CEO and board of directors.

It just means these are the guys we recognize. These are the ones you can listen to safely. The apostles respect these men and so should you.

That way, when someone else comes up and says something that's crazy, these men can say to the church, no, that's not right. And the church says, oh, Paul approves of these men. The apostles recognize these guys.

Now, that kind of recognition can exist without any kind of political attachment, without even an office. I mean, when Paul says Stephanus and his household are addicted to service, submit to people like that, the man doesn't need an office. He just needs to qualify.

He just needs to be a faithful following. And that's how I think the early church was. And then, of course, it became institutionalized.

Institutional authority requires submission to the will of the office holder. And remember,



Jesus said, it shall not be that way among you in Matthew chapter 20, verses 25 through 28. So that's how it is.

So that's how it is with the Gentiles, with pagans. The leaders of the Gentiles, they lord it over you. They exercise authority.

Don't know. That's not going to be that way with you. Your leaders are the ones who are the servants.

And then, of course, there's institutional authority because the institution has a life of its own. You have to have a succession of leaders. When the office is vacant, you've got to put someone in there.

Now, my radio program has a 501c3. I'm one of those people who think the church doesn't need a 501c3 to be a church. Though I'm not one of those who say it's a compromise to do so.

As far as I'm concerned, see, I get calls sometimes on my program. If you get a 501c3, you've sold out to Caesar, you know. I think, well, no, if you get a 501c3, it means people who donate to you don't have to pay taxes on their donation.

That's all it means. They say, but the government, if they give you that, they can tell you what to say. And I say, I've had a 501c3 for over 20 years and no official has ever come to my door and told me what to say.

If he does, I'll tell him, you know what you can do with this 501c3? I don't want it anymore. I don't have to do what the government officials say. But it's been a very innocuous thing to have a 501c3 because people will donate whether I have one or not.

But it's nice if when they donate, they don't have to give a chunk of that money back to Obama to lend to China. And I'd much rather that people could steward more of their own money. And so as long as the government's not going to try to intrude and tell me what to say, I'll let them give me favors if they want.

But I'm certainly not going to depend on them. But because I have a 501c3, we have a board of directors. But I don't call my ministry a church.

It's a radio program. It's not quite the same thing. And if you have a church with a 501c3, you're going to legally have to have a board of directors.

And maybe that can be an issue, I suppose, unless your board has got the same mentality that we're talking about rightly here. That they see themselves as just filling a service. They're not the bosses.

They're just serving the church by providing this financial situation. I don't believe churches need to have 501c3s. The home church I was in didn't.

The church in Idaho didn't. Didn't even have a name or official leaders. But some churches, perhaps because of the way they function, it might be to their advantage.

I'm not critical of that, like some. The main thing is that I believe the church remains spiritual only as it avoids becoming institutional. And institutional, I won't go through it because I've run out of time.

But the notes here, I have a lot of points where I believe institutional church is the only thing we've known. And that's true whether we're Catholic, Protestant, or anything. Even Plymouth Brethren, who probably come closer than anyone else to rejecting all institutionalism.

They don't even have pastors or whatever. But they still have their traditions that define them as the Plymouth Brethren. And if you don't go with their traditions, you're going to have to go somewhere else.

There's still that mentality in almost every church you ever know of. And that's why organic church or home church is a movement that people are exploring. Because they say, you know, this doesn't seem really right.

Because when a church gets political, it gets ugly. I don't know that there's anything uglier than institutional religion. You know that Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris and these new atheists who are writing books against God, they all say the same thing.

They say religion is dangerous. Look at 9-11. That's Islamic religion.

Look at the Crusades. That's Christian religion. And I say, you know, I think I agree with you.

Religion is a dangerous thing. God isn't. Those people who do dangerous things aren't doing what God wants them to do.

Jesus isn't. There's never been anyone who was obeying Jesus and hurt someone innocent, you know. Because the very act of hurting someone innocent means you're not doing what Jesus said.

The problem is that the world doesn't know the difference between institutional religion, because there's not much else out there to see. And true, the organic community of Christ, meeting in many different places wherever they want to, some of them meeting Starbucks, some of them meeting, Holmes probably is the location of choice for most. But the world just doesn't see much alternative anymore.

And it probably won't for a while. Even if the organic church movement grows so that 50% of people who call themselves Christians are in it, it'll still be kind of invisible because it's meeting in homes, unless there's orchestrated outreach, as some of you

have. But still, I think that people will be evangelized better when they can see that there is something different than what they called church when they were growing up church.

What they've seen when they visited church. And I want to say this, I'm not as critical as it might seem against all institutional churches. I'm against institutionalizing the church.

I think it's been a bad thing for the kingdom of God to institutionalize the church. But there are many churches that are part of this institutional mentality that don't know any better. Like I don't believe in salaried clergy.

I don't believe that there were any salaried clergy. Now, I believe they were supported. And I had a different opinion with the last church I was really a member of.

Because I don't take or believe in taking a salary. And he was salaried, of course. And he said, well, don't you believe in supported ministry? I said, yes, I believe in supported ministry.

That's how I live. I'm supported. I don't believe in salaried ministry.

He said, well, what's the difference? I thought, well, it should be obvious. When you have a salary, there's someone writing you a check. An organization.

Some organization has hired you. You're paid to do what they want you to do. But a minister should be a servant of God.

He should just do whatever God wants him to do. There may be no organization that wants to underwrite that. So what? God will underwrite it.

When Jesus sent his disciples two by two in Matthew 10, he said to them, don't take any extra stuff with you because the labor is worthy of his hire. Well, that almost sounds like an endorsement of salaried clergy. But then he said, freely you've received, freely give.

In the same chapter, a few verses later. Now, freely give means you don't hire yourself out for ministry. That's not free.

What it is is that everyone who's a minister of God is a slave, a servant of God, owned by God. And he's worthy of his hire. His owner is God.

He'll pay your hire. It may not be through the people you minister to. You might minister to people who are indigent and can't help you.

That's okay. God knows. He knows how to supply for you.

People, when you get into a salaried position, and I'm not, again, I'm speaking idealistically because I'm not really personally critical of pastors who take salaries,

unless there's something more about that to be critical about. Sometimes there is. But I know pastors who are salaried and they would serve even if they weren't salaried.

It's just that the avenue that God opened up for them to serve is a church that pays a salary to the pastor. So they take a salary. And I mean, that's how God has been providing for them.

And I don't hold that against them. For one thing, most pastors never have thought of any alternative to that. Ever since the church got institutionalized, the ministry became a profession.

I have a friend who told me that he was, he dropped out of seminary because he heard at a commencement speech that when the speaker to the students at the seminary said, now when you graduate from here, you'll have as much training as any professional. You have as much training as a doctor or a lawyer, and you should be paid by a church commensurate like a professional. And my friend said he dropped out that day.

But that's not, I mean, maybe they don't always say it that blatantly, but that's what many people think. I went through all this education. I could be a doctor or a lawyer with that much education.

Therefore, I should command a salary like that. Well, if you're a hireling, sure. Hirelings can do that.

But Jesus wants shepherds, not hirelings. Shepherds love the sheep and they serve out of love. They serve out of love for God.

And they're serving God. They're not serving man. They're not serving an organization.

I sometimes tell this story to illustrate that I teach sometimes for youth with a mission, an organization that trains missionaries around the world. Boy, they've got, that stretches my doctrinal flexibility because I certainly disagree with an awful lot of things they teach. And they disagree with a lot of things I teach, but they keep inviting me back.

It's crazy. But they usually, I teach for a week and they give me usually an honorarium. And during the 80s and the 90s, I taught two or three times a year for one of the bases in Honolulu.

I teach all over the world for them. But one base would invite me several times a year in Honolulu. And of course, I became accustomed to teaching for a week and receiving a particular honorarium.

Now, I understood that this is not a paycheck and I wouldn't have accepted it as paycheck. I mean, I would never have come and agreed to teach for X amount of dollars.

To me, that's not freely giving.

You freely receive, you freely give. You don't contract. You're not a contract laborer when you're a minister of the gospel.

So anyway, I taught there many times. And one week I taught there for a week. And the leader of the school came and he gave me two YWAM t-shirts and a YWAM coffee mug.

And he said, this is your honorarium. And I said, well, I chuckled because I thought he was joking, but it turned out it was true. We had a really small school, not much money.

And it disappointed me initially, although only for a few moments, because I've never worked as a contract laborer in the ministry. And the Lord reminded me, you're not working for YWAM. They invited you to teach, but they're not your employer.

I'm your employer. You work for free for my people, and I'll take care of your needs. And sure enough, of course, as always, God provided my needs from some other source.

And I actually thanked God after that for that experience, because I had come to, in my mind, associate a week of teaching for YWAM usually results in this amount of honorarium, kind of counted on that money coming. But I needed that sort of wake-up call, that reminder that they don't owe me anything. If I speak to people, they don't owe me anything.

God's the one who takes care of me, and he doesn't have to provide through the same people I'm talking to. And I've lived that way for over 25 years. I've been in ministry for 40 years, but in the first many years of my ministry, I worked part-time at jobs to support myself in ministry.

But when I went to full-time ministry in 1983, that's 28 years ago, I've just done what I just described, teach wherever people want me to teach. And I've never had to worry about money. And I always think if I was salaried, I'd have to worry about money, because I'd always wonder, am I getting enough cost of living increase here? Is my benefits package adequate to cover my family's medical... I've never had any benefits package.

I've never had any medical insurance. Never needed. I raised five kids, never saw a doctor.

Never needed to. And if we had, God would have provided for that. I knew that.

And I mean, trusting God works. But the point is that I've got... I just don't believe in institutional authority in the church. I do believe people should submit to one another and mostly submit to the Word of God.

And just as I'm going to open up for questions here, one question I anticipate, of course,

is what about where it says in Hebrews, submit to those who lead you and obey them. Well, it also says in the same chapter, those who lead you have spoken to you the Word of God. You see, the Christian is supposed to follow the Word of God.

A true leader is one who speaks the Word of God to you. And when he does, of course, you submit to that. You obey him when he speaks the Word of God.

But if he speaks contrary to the Word of God, you don't obey him. He's not the one who has authority. It's the Word of God that has authority.

He is... the leader is leading you because he is speaking the Word of God to you. And as he does so, you submit to that because you're submitted to God. God is the king, not the pastor or the elder or the teacher in the pulpit.

And so, of course, we submit to the Word of God. But certainly, we don't think that because a man holds the office of pastor, if he tells you to do something you know is against the Bible, you should do that. There are people who believe that.

And the worst kind of institutional church authority that ever existed, I knew of in my lifetime, was the shepherding movement, if you ever remember that. And that was the view that you do obey your pastor no matter what he says. If you don't obey him, you're not covered.

You've got a Jezebel spirit. They say that even if your pastor tells you to do something that you believe is wrong, you can appeal to him. But if he says no, do it anyway, they say, do what he said, and he'll be responsible for the wrong you do.

That's not what the Bible says. When the authorities told Peter to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, he didn't say, well, okay, but you're responsible for God. No, he said, we must obey God rather than man.

He said, if it's right for us to obey you instead of God, you judge, but we're going to keep doing what Jesus told us to do. And so you don't, you know, you don't obey a leader because he's a leader. You obey a leader because what he said is what God's Word says, and you're obeying God.

The leader is just the one who's talking for God at that moment. But you have to decide whether he's talking to God. Like the Bereans, you know, Paul was preaching Berean and it says the people, they were more noble than the Thessalonians because they heard Paul and they searched the scriptures daily to see if these things were so, and then they believed.

Paul was an apostle, but it was noble of them to check out to see if it was scriptural, what he was saying. So anyway, I've been kind of random in the things I've covered and not covered from these notes, and even these notes are hugely condensed from a larger

series. If you're interested in more, there is more there at the website.