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The Pastor as Leader with John Currie

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

With everything the pastor must do—preach, pray, visit, raise money, organize meetings, write emails, study, write, marry, bury, and baptize—does he also need to be a leader? John Currie, in his new book *The Pastor as Leader* (Crossway), says yes. But don't fear, this is not about one more impossible task or another time burden for the pastor. Leadership is about living and preaching as a man of God for the people of God. In this practical episode Kevin talks with John Currie, professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, about what effective leadership in the church looks like (and doesn't look like). There is plenty of rich food for thought—both for the seasoned (and weary) pastor and for the young man just starting out in ministry.

Books & Everything:

The Pastor as Leader: Principles and Practices for Connecting Preaching and Leadership

The (Not-So-Secret) Secret to Reaching the Next Generation

Don't Waste Your Life

Transcript

Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. Kevin Deung, senior pastor at Christ's Covenant Church in Matthews, North Carolina.

Today I am joined by my special guest and friend, John Currie. We are going to talk about his new book published by Crossway. Just came out a couple weeks ago.

The Pastor as Leader, principles, and practices for connecting, preaching, and preaching. And leadership. John, thanks for coming on the podcast.

Well, thanks for having me. I'm really glad to be here. It's a privilege.

So John has a demon from Westminster and is professor of pastoral theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and has pastored in Grand Rapids, has pastored in

the Philadelphia area, and before that, pastored in an alliance church. There's just a very brief sketch. Give us a little bit more.

Tell us about yourself, where you're from, your family, and this route that brought you through Philly and then back to Philly as a professor. All right. Well, you may know this.

I was born in Scotland. I was actually born in Glasgow and moved to Canada when I was 13 years old. I actually wasn't raised in a home that confessed Christ.

So I came to faith in Christ. Well, I moved to Canada, which is before I was 12. But I came to faith in Christ when I was 13.

I was called to the ministry when I was 16. And the church that I was called to the ministry, and I mean, you talk about the alliance route, I was saved and called to the ministry of Pentecostal Church. But it was a kind of Pentecostal church that had a really high view of the scripture, so they got me into the Bible.

And then I moved my wife, actually, what we call a missionary dated me over to the Christian and missionary alliance. And so we were dating since we were teenagers, and we're now coming up on close to 40 years of marriage. We're just so grateful to God.

And because of that high view of scripture that had been embedded in me, I chose a Bible college that had a high view of scripture. It was a little place called Peace River Bible Institute, which was just outside of Grand Prairie, Alberta. It was, you know, a prairie Bible Institute plant in the 30s.

So high view of scripture. So I came here, went to school. While I was here, there was a little OPC church that was looking for a pastor.

And I became pulpit supply, and then I became, when I became fully Presbyterian in my theology, I became the pastor. And in that church was a professor's scholar by the name of Richard B. Gaffin. And Dick, as he insisted I call him, became my mentor theologically.

And so he really, really has influenced theological methodology and conclusions, particularly how I've written Paul and Acts. And so I pastor the church close to the seminary, taught here part time, and then a church in Michigan called me to pastor there. I went out there and pastor for about five years.

And then when there was a transition to PT department here, the seminary said, would you come back and lead the PT department? And so that was 2018. And the Lord has blessed that. So that's kind of the journey.

The pilgrimage, maybe a more reformed way to put it. But yeah. That's great.

I'm curious as a native grand rapidian and spent some time in Philadelphia in and out. Of

course, I never lived there. But not looking for better or worse.

From an outsider, you might think, yeah, it's reformed places. But they're very different cultures. Yeah, they're very different cultures.

I think one of the things, I did not have the advantage of generations of Christian heritage. And so I kind of had to fight for everything, theologically. And I think one of the, I wish I'd had it.

It's a great advantage and one of the great virtues of the culture that you grew up in is that Christian heritage. And that really can be built upon and learned from. And I actually think it's one of the high privileges.

One of the challenges, I think, can be that you start to assume your theology. And it's not so much that your theology is actually shaping your biography, but it becomes assumed. And then I think the other thing that can do is it can sometimes, as you would know, it can affect your view of the mission of the church.

And when you've got a rich heritage where we all kind of confess the same things, it can be one of the challenges, can be trying to see the outsider, the person who hasn't grown up in that. You know, the Christians would be much more in a minority. It'd be much more secular.

And then even if you boiled that down, the Reformed Presbyterian witness would even be smaller than that. Though there's a great heritage here, in part because of Westminster Theological Seminary and where Presbyterianism started. So I just think you're coming from different places and, yeah, like you say, not one, not better or worse.

There's different values, different virtues, and then there's different challenges in different content. Yeah, there's always a thick culture has a lot of strengths and then has challenges, and that's often what you get and you don't see it when you're in it sometimes. I remember thinking in seminary people, of course, everyone's, we want community, community, community.

And yes, we want that. But then sometimes I remember somebody who had was visiting a pastor from India and he said something like, all of you people in America, you always want community. He said, we have a lot of community and let me tell you what some of the challenges are.

Everybody knows everybody's business. There's, you know, there can be, it can be kind of gossipy, you kind of, you, you need to measure up. So he was just saying, yes, community, but a thick community can, you know, I saw this in different churches, you, it's great.

You know what everybody's, you know, who's on the football team and you know what

everybody's doing. And so if there's a need, you come and you do it, but it also means they notice if you're adding on to your house and they think, Oh, wow, who do they think they are? So yeah, it really, and it's a sort of a segue here into thinking about pastoral ministry because the place where we minister is not going to be the same. And we as pastors need to both learn to understand and love that place, but then also not be afraid to lead and challenge in it.

So just give me the, the pricy and the motivation behind this book, the pastor as leader. So there's lots of books on pastoral ministry. There's books on leadership, but this is a particular burden of yours.

So explain that. Yeah. Well, as we talked a little bit about my history, you know, I came to faith in a tradition of what I reformed and then I was kind of disciplined in a tradition that wasn't at least self-consciously reformed.

But there were really end of mission and I was really thankful for that and what I found was a lot of the pastors could lead or maybe manage and they could talk, but there wasn't necessarily, they didn't necessarily have a commitment. There was exceptions, but they didn't necessarily have a commitment to expository preaching and systematic theologians. Pastures weren't necessarily theologians.

Sometimes that was seemed to get in the way. And then my theology reformed and I came home as it were and I found myself at home theologically and reformed Presbyterian church, but started to notice, it seems like that often results in becoming insular or often results in lack of zeal for outreach, a lack of zeal for transformation and the maturity and life of people. We can kind of assume things and I thought this can't be right.

The idea of trying to lead the church forward in maturity and in mission can't be in contradiction to having a sound pulpit, but I was absolutely committed because of the priority of the word of God to the primacy of preaching. And so my question then became, can these two things come together? Can you be faithful to the scriptures and reformed doctrine? Can you be committed to the primacy and priority of the Christ-centered exposition and be zealous about leading the church and wise and leading the church in maturity and mission? And so that's why it came about, I think the answer is yes and I tried to, the book tries to put that together. Touch on something you already said, but this is related to that point too about leadership.

I love when I get a new book reading the acknowledgments, I don't know if you're like that. That's usually, I think a lot of people skip that, that's the first thing I read because I want to know, who is this person, who are they talking to, who are they thanking? And so I noticed you said two mentors in particular. So Richard Gaffin, teacher, exemplar and Harry Reider friend and mentor.

So say a little bit more about each of those guys, their formative influence and how it shapes your thinking in this book. Yeah. Well, maybe I'll start with Harry and then come back and pick.

I know Harry was a huge influence on you two and a dear friend and both of us just planted the church where I'm standing right now. Yeah. Yeah.

And I just dedicated the book to Harry because he was such an influence on my life. And so there's a lot of ways in which I think if you take the principles and practices that are in the pastor leader and you just kind of put a picture, Harry Reider up next to it, I just think there's a lot of similarities there. It's just kind of the model exemplar.

I was so grateful for him, you know, that he was he was an uncompromising, sound, skilled theologian, a terrific preacher, but he could, but he also had a really warm heart for revival, for reformation in the church. He was not content with status quo. And then the Lord had given these amazing leadership gifts.

And so what I sometimes say to people is what I noticed in Harry's ministry and the way he impacted me is sometimes you get guys who are committed theologically, sometimes you get guys who really believe in revival and sometimes you get guys who are really good leaders, but seldom do you get all three put together. And I think the Lord uniquely did that in Harry. And then if you remember this about him, he was just so accessible to people.

Yeah. I mean, I couldn't believe he gave me the time of day. So he was a huge influence on me.

Both in his character, which was impeccable and his competencies, which were just remarkable. And I just shared his convictions. Maybe there'd been one or two things that we'd quibble about, but pretty much it was yeah, I just agree with him.

I could say some of his influence in the book when some of Harry's drop down menus that he would just fall the motivation, the manner, the message that you didn't copy them at all. But he was so good that I always joked and will still tell his son Ike, your dad just had these files and it would just open up with probably some leadership talk he had given on the Civil War battlefield or something. Right.

Yeah. Anyway, I interrupted. No, no.

Yeah. His influence is very evident. I was just kind of looking at the book this morning prep preparing for this.

And I said, I said to my wife, I said, honey, there's way too much alliteration in this book. And she looked at me like I've been trying to tell you that, but I just could not best Harry alliteration. And you could just alliterate anything.

So yeah, there's a lot of, I mean, not just in that kind of formal stuff, but I think just in the heart of it and perspective on it. So he was a huge influence on my life. And then of course, Dr. Gaffin, Dick, the way I put it is, I came to seminary and I was a Bible expositor, I was kind of a Bible principles man.

And I'm really thankful for that and really influenced by some names that you would know in that. It was sitting in Dr. Gaffin's systematic classes that I learned to see, believe, love and preach Christ in the ways I never had. I think he opened up Christ at the center for me and through his exegetical theological method.

And then the other thing about Dr. Gaffin, for those who know him, he'll be embarrassed to be here as we say this. He's just one of the godliest, most faithful, personable people you'll ever meet. I mean, talk about an example of theology and biography.

And he's just been very kind to love me and my family. All that goes all the way. It's not just me and Rhonda, it's my kids and my grandkids.

So just the exemplar, just theologically, but in living out that theology, that leads me to a little parenthesis here, exhortation to anyone, in particular, any young guys who are listening to this maybe in pastoral ministry, it's occurred to me and you just said it very well there with Dick. One of the secrets often to a legacy is that when people talk about you, they realize in talking to other people who've met you, that you actually got even better when they met you in person. Yeah.

And I think part of the secret sauce of Tim Keller, who went to be with the Lord at the same time, Harry did, and I disagreed with Tim on some things and we talked about that very candidly. And he was very open to us having a conversation with that. But part of what came out after Tim passed was so many people had stories, kind of like, even though Tim and Harry are very different personalities, people with Harry had all sorts of, Harry spent time with me, Tim, you had all of these stories, here's this world-known Christian leader and all sorts of younger guys that, you know what? He was just a normal person, he talked to me, he was easygoing.

It sounds very simple, but guys out there, we need more, just normal people. We're not going to have the gifts that Tim or Harry had, but just normal people that when they meet you, they actually feel like, oh, I liked your books, but I like you even more. And it's amazing that that's not the case.

Yeah. Yeah. That's a great way to put it.

And I would say that been true of both of those men in my life. I mean, I just couldn't believe I had access to them, but they didn't make you feel like I'm giving you access. No.

They just love people. And I think as pastors, you know, as I touch on this, I think it's in

chapter five, the motivation for ministry is love. The motivation to love people because you love the God whose image they're made in and you want to imitate Christ to them.

I think Harry imitated that, at least for me. Okay. And I know Dick did.

And so we need, I think the next generation needs examples of men who love people. They don't just love their books. They love their books, but they love people.

So let me ask getting to the heart of the book, the pastor is leader and it's about preaching as leadership. And you talk about this in a bunch of different contexts and we'll come back to some of them. You say on page 43, to lead God's people in the context where Christ has appointed him, the pastor must learn how to communicate a biblical vision and define a biblical strategy alongside the Christ like character required to serve as an example for God's people.

The abilities to communicate vision and define and execute strategy are core competencies in which the leaders of God's people must continue to grow. And in a lot of ways, that's at the very heart of this book. And I agree with that.

One of the responses, however, I think somebody could say, and let's just think about about Harry. I mean, Harry was called his friends, maybe his enemies too, but he was the general and part of that was his love of the Civil War. But he also had, I mean, just a God given general's sort of commanding spirit that I don't have.

So what would you say to the pastor out there who reads that and thinks, yeah, that sounds right, but I'm more introverted or I'm not the leader guy. The vision strategy thing is very hard for me. I want to preach and I want to be at the hospital bed and love people.

But now you're saying I got to be this dynamic, larger than life leader. So help disabuse us of some of those notions. Because I know that's not all that you, that's not what you mean.

Yeah, it's not what I mean. Yeah. I mean, when again, back to Harry, when he would call, I just pick up the phone and say general.

Yeah. So I mean, that's kind of, that's how we thought about him, you know. But I don't think why I really want to steer away from, and I do this in class, if I didn't do it in the book, is that this means you have to have a certain kind of personality.

Right. I matter of fact, if you go to first Corinthians, I think that was the problem in the first four chapters of first Corinthians that they thought, well, Paul's not, he's not a Paulist, so he can't really be our leader. Paul is at pains in the first four chapters to say, listen, it's not about my personality.

It's about the spirit working through the word and I'm the story of the word. And so I think the pastor who doesn't think he has the quote on quote leadership personality needs to realize that the vision being clear and compelling is not about his personality. It's about the Holy Spirit opening up what's in the Bible.

And I don't think the pastor gets to be cutting some of the other side of it is. So in other words, trust the efficacy of the spirit through the word. Don't rely on your personality.

At one point in the book, I mentioned, you know, I've heard, I think it's in the chapter on the Holy Spirit, I've heard guys preach with the personality of an Oxford dawn, you know, I mean, I remember listening to Jack Packer for the first time, first time I heard him at a league in your conference, and he, and he preached on Isaiah six, the holiness of God. And you know, the most dynamic thing he did was gesture with his right arm once or twice just so when he was very slightly, yeah, that's it. Exactly.

Yeah, when he was done, I was nailed to the chair. And then I've heard John Piper, you know, and, you know, it's such passion and exegesis on fire and they had the same effect. So I don't think it's a function of personality.

I think it's a function of the Holy Spirit working with and through the word. And you have to trust that. Now trusting that, I think what I'd also want to say is because your personality is not quote, unquote, leadership personality doesn't mean that you don't have the responsibility through exposition to make the vision and the strategy that Christ has given to his church clear.

So that's your job. Now, if you, so I don't think you get to give up that responsibility. You have to work at that.

But now how does that work out in the life of the congregation? Well, this is, I think, a great opportunity for what I talked about in chapter 10. Has God put in your church people who have gifts like this? And how do you then, as pastor, honor their gifts by letting them help you in figuring out how that vision gets operationalized, that strategy gets operationalized. You know, in some context you can staff to that, like you have an executive pastor.

Some context you're not going to be able to staff to it. But what you are going to be able to do is find people in your church who, when you cast a vision, when you define a strategy, are motivated to say, I can employ my gifts to help that be executed. So I think pastors should feel at home in their own skin.

They should not be trying to be somebody else. Dependent upon the Holy Spirit, just like Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 2. That said, if I've got it right, there is a vision that's in the scriptures. There's a strategy in the scriptures.

And your job is to get it out and give it to God's people and then employ God's people

and helping you according to their gifts put it in practice. I appreciate it in, I forget which chapter it was. It was 172 and 173.

You gave some specific examples of how to think about strategy through preaching. Because you explain, and this is pretty common in leadership literature, vision and strategy. Vision is sort of where are we going strategies? How do we get there? And one of the things I don't think I'm very good at as a pastor leader is thinking about the preaching in sort of the institutional leadership capacity.

So one of the feedback I've gotten in trying to help me improve in that. But I don't, and you say, it doesn't necessarily mean go out and do a five-week series on church vision. So I just, boy, I just can't, it's hard for my spirit to get energized.

But I really liked what you did there. And it was helping me. You gave some concrete examples.

So just explain this one to us. You said, for example, if you're preaching through Luke. Now, this is going to take some foresight.

And that's usually where I fail because I haven't, I'm not thinking ahead far enough. But you're preaching through Luke. And you notice, for example, that ministry to the poor is an important theme.

And then you think about, okay, how can I lead our church in this direction? Just say more about that example and how you think about preaching and strategy. Yeah. Maybe I could fall back on an idea that came from David Pauluson when he talks about seeing Christ in scriptures is once you see it, you can't unsee it.

I think if pastors pick up what's in the first few chapters that as a preacher, you are a leader and your identity as a man of God and all that's there, I think what starts to happen is when you come to the scriptures, you can't unsee it and you start to begin to think intuitively and prayerfully about what are the implications of this book? What are the implications of this passage for the life of my church? Not just for the life of the individual, which it has to be, but also for the life of the entire congregation. What are the implications of this for our congregation in the place in which God has placed it to do ministry? So on one hand, I think if guys just embrace or persuade it, maybe I should say, by the wits in the first part of the book, as they start to approach the text, it's not that you don't say, it's not that you don't go exegetical and systematics and biblical theology. I'm going to say it's no less than that, but you sort of bring another level.

Now, what are the implications of this in the life of my church? And I think if you're an informed pastor, if you're amongst your people, or in a larger system, you're amongst enough of your people and have enough of a system to help you know your people, that's going to start to become more intuitive. So it is a little different. I think it might be.

I don't know if it's right to say it's a unique contribution to the book, but it is a bit different, because I'm not saying, well, I'm going to come up with my vision, my strategy, and then I go preach on that. Rather, as I develop my preaching, I'm asking another question. How does this, how does Jesus, what does he want to lead his church into through this in the context I'm in? And it's just, in some ways, you could say it's an application step.

It's another dimension of application. And so that's kind of what I'm talking about. Yeah, and I think that's a good way of putting it.

It's another step of application. I found that helpful to think, not just individually, what are we doing now in our lives or in your workplace? We want to do that. And I think you'd agree with this.

The application for leadership in the church doesn't mean, wow, every new sermon series, I got to start two new programs, because now this bit. But like you said there about the poor and Luke, one of your points was, okay, how am I going to help teach people about what our deaconate does? And is our deaconate doing the sort of work in our midst with the poor as they should? And do I need to put some things in place so that when it comes to this and people are now seeing this theme in God's Word, they're ready to, you know, we got a mercy fund or deaconate fund. Those are things.

Yes, they take some work, but it's not a, you know, a new department at the church. It's just thinking ahead in a way that, you know, most pastors aren't really good at. And I don't think it's something I've been excellent at.

So I found that really helpful. How do you think, John, about this particular phrase, which you've said already, this was another big idea. The man of God.

So I think if we hear that phrase, one, it can sound like maybe a Pentecostal church. Oh, that's the man of God. Or we've heard the phrase abused.

Like, you know, this person should be excused for their sins because that's a man of God. Right. And yet it's an important biblical category.

And I bet there's a whole lot of Christians out there who have memorized it. And I think it would be competent for every good work. And probably just go by that without ever thinking about it.

So who is the man of God? And why is this an important label in the scriptures? Yeah. Well, you know, I appreciate the sensitivity to how it can be misused in a number of different sides. And as we were working through how to frame this book, we actually were really sensitive to it.

And it's one of the reasons that in the introduction I address how pastoral leadership can

be misused and abused. And it's one amongst many of the reasons that I included a whole chapter, chapter five on the example of the man of God. And really try to make the point that you are a man of God.

The man of God is at the right hand of the Father. And your job is to be his messenger. So those qualifications, I do think it's an important biblical term.

I think it's an overlooked biblical term for the pastor. It's not the only one. I find it significant when we're trying to train the next generation of pastors that Paul uses it twice of Timothy for his Timothy chapter six and second Timothy chapter three, both times when he's giving him his charge.

Right. So it strikes me that this is how he would have him think about himself and how he'd think about his ministry. So as you know, it goes all the way back to the Old Testament.

And it was Howard Griffiths, not Howard Griffiths, Jonathan Griffiths. John Griffiths. In his book, preaching in the New Testament, they really highlighted this for me.

So I started to trace it and look at it. And it goes all the way back. And the way I put it is the man of God is God's man set apart by God's Son and powered by God's Spirit to proclaim God's Word.

To lead God's people and the God's purposes. So he's a set-apart man and his stewardship is the Word of God. But the end of his stewardship is to lead God's people where God wants them to go.

So I think that man of God title, when you recognize, particularly what we do with in chapter five and pick up on first Timothy chapter four verse 12, that he has to be an example of the one that he's preaching and the message he's preaching. I think when it's wrapped in that biblical theological understanding, when it's wrapped in that Christ-imitating model of loving servant yet stalwart leadership, I think you guard it from the abuses. I think you guard it from the misuses of the term.

There's a really helpful little footnote at the ESV, 2 Timothy 3, 17, has a little footnote, man of God. That is a messenger of God, the phrase echoes a common Old Testament expression, which is, yeah, there's more we want to say, but that's a good way to point people in the right direction, that this, yes, scripture equips all of us to rebuke and exhort and encourage in different ways, but in particular, as Paul's writing Timothy there, this is a pastoral function and a pastoral demarcation. I want to come back to what you talk about, the potential abuses in just a moment.

I need to thank our sponsors, which will be glad for me to do, since the first one is Crossway, and Crossway has published this book from you, and I don't write the ads, they just give them to me. So today, I'm supposed to mention the new book, The Not So

Secret Secret to Reaching the Next Generation by Kevin DeYoung. That's just what it says here.

To call it a book is very generous. You could read it on a very short bus ride. It's really a little booklet, and it was a sermon that I preached, and turned into a little booklet here.

Five ways to effectively communicate the Christian faith with the next generation. Grab them with passion, win them with love, hold them with holiness, challenge them with truth, amaze them with God. So it's a little book, you can read it in a half hour.

So from Crossway, thank you. And then also Desiring God, our other sponsor. And I want to mention a book that if you haven't read, you should.

It's many, many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, have read it already. That is don't waste your life. Here's the blurb that I did for John Piper's famous book.

Risk is right. Be mastered by one thing. Make much of Christ and Him crucified.

Those exhortations and many more like them are just as relevant today as they were 20 years ago. As a young man, I was captivated by Piper's pleas for fear, defeating joy in Jesus Christ. I still need this message.

But now I want my children to hear it as well. Confident and prayerful that God will continue to use this powerful book for 20 more years. So I did that at the 20-year anniversary.

And it's a good reminder for folks out there, maybe you're a Gen X or like me and you think, boy, we've all read these books. Well, there's a whole generation that hasn't. And that's the great thing about great books is they continue to serve another generation and another.

I want to come back to what we were talking about, John. You have your wife, you know, maybe not doesn't like this alliteration, but I found it really helpful. So you talk about criticism in facing criticism, which every pastor is going to face criticism.

And if you lead, you're going to face even more criticism. And I'd love you to say a little bit about each of these three words and slow down here because this is really important. You say a pastor can become authoritarian.

He can accommodate in a bad way, I think, there or abdicate. So talk about each of those. So a pastor out there listening to this is doing his level best, and people are upset with him, and he's getting criticism.

He already got an angry email on Monday morning. He's got somebody on the session that's always after him. And there are wrong ways to respond.

So just walk us through some of these responses. Authoritarian accommodation and abdication. Yeah, well, you know, the authoritarian, I think, alludes to the kind of concerns that we might highlight with Man of God.

So I'm challenged. I'm critiqued. Maybe I even feel wounded.

And so my response becomes, don't question me. I'm the Man of God. I'm a man of God.

You don't know your Bible the way I know it. In the word, I have a positional authority. And therefore, you know, any disagreement is interpreted as disunity.

And so what I'm going to do is become overbearing and try to, you know, and in worse cases, I'm going to try to silence your voice. I'm going to try to marginalize you from the community. And in the worse case, I may even try to tear down your reputation so that what you're saying doesn't have credibility.

I mean, those are the kind of authoritarian things that you see happening which is a sinful reaction. And I think that's a way to misuse pastoral office and abuse it. Accommodation is, and you said there's a right way to accommodate.

I mean, when we're talking about trying to help the Bible and help truth make sense to people, we're accommodating the capacity of the hearers as the confession puts it. That's a good thing. But I think when I talk about accommodation, I'm kind of thinking about being a politician, you know.

So what I'm going to do is I'm going to take the pulse and rather than, and what even if the pulse goes against biblical conviction or confessional conviction, what I'm going to do is I'm going to move so that I have the favor of the majority. In some way or another, that could be theological. It could be moral.

It could be. But I'm going to accommodate so that I take the sting out of the cost of actual leadership. That makes sense? Yep.

And then the abdication is, I'm not responsible. Somebody else is responsible. And I'm going to let everybody else take responsibility for the decisions.

I'm going to try to, you know, get myself out of the firing line. And we see this and we see this in families. We see it in all kinds of leadership environments.

And I'm just saying that none of those is if we're doing leadership in union with Christ, in imitation of Christ filled with the spirit of Christ, none of those is an expression of that. None of those are acceptable. So that's where I'm trying to get at in that section of the book.

What's your, obviously anecdotal and imperfect sense, but you, you see a lot of, you teach students and you know a lot of pastors. I teach our pastoral ministry class on a

regular basis. And my sense is, while certainly the authoritarian needs to be warned against, the scripture warns against it, is I just see the, you know, the men as they come through a class, I'm probably more concerned that they're going to get into ministry and need the courage to, to be buoyed up as they get beaten up a little bit.

Then I am concerned that they're going to go in there and be domineering and heavy handed. Though that can happen as well. Do you have a sense? Because I think the way a lot of people out there would describe our cultural moment is almost every pastor is, you know, bound to be authoritarian or, and that, again, underscore problem and it exists.

But, you know, I've talked, I've heard Don Doriani talk about this as well, that he, he just senses among a lot of young men a lack of confidence in, in a confidence to, to lead, to be a senior pastor, to say things that are hard. What's your sense in students that you work with? Well, I think the phrase that comes back to my mind often is, you know, Luther's sentiment that we're like drums trying to fall, falling off a horse. You know, you get up one side, you fall off the other, you get up and you fall off the other side.

And I think that we're like that culturally, we're like that in the church, we're like that personally. We over, we over correct, when we don't correct through the biblical process of sanctification, we end up falling off the other side of it. So I, I don't want to diminish that any of these can be a dominant problem.

But I'll tell you what, I think I've observed and this is, and actually I put it in the positive Kevin, the guys I'm working with when they hear the call to leadership, they're really emboldened by it. They're embracing it. And so I think that's a positive, but I think what it might indicate is to some degree they've either not heard it or it's been diminished or they've not had the examples.

What I'm finding is, when we laid this kind of a call out to men, that they're really stepping into it and wanting to know how do I lead my family? How do I lead my church? How do I, you know, how do I not be a authoritarian, but how do I, you know, the way I put it then in chapter 5 is, servant leadership is not non-leadership. And it is stalwart leadership. What it means is, it's not about me.

So if it means I have to defer in order for God's will to be done, I'll do that. If it means I have to die in order for God's will to be done, I'll do that. And I think when guys hear that call, I'm seeing them rise to it.

But I think that might indicate that they maybe haven't had the call, they haven't had the examples, and I think, you know, some of it is, if you look at the breakdown of the family and, you know, a lot of guys are getting called into the ministry, didn't come from it. Well families, you see dads that are leading their families, you see, and you've got generations of pastors in front of you, you've got examples, all of that virtue. And most

of the people in the culture aren't coming from that.

And so I think that might be right. That might be right. I have to also be careful that I'm not assessing people through my disposition.

And, you know, I see this with pastors. Mentoring means I turn you into mate. And I don't think that's what mentoring is.

So, because I'm wired one way, I have to be careful that I'm not assessing the default the other way. But I think what Dan Sands probably right, I think you're probably right, but I'm encouraged because I'm seeing young guys rise to it. Yeah, that's a good positive way to put it.

And I'm encouraged too with the students that we see in, you know, for all of the chatter about celebrity pastors or big eva. I mean, the guys I find, they're just saying, I know it's a hard culture out there. I want to serve big, small, medium, whatever.

I want to be faithful. And I do think we have an opportunity in our culture because you said it could be the breakdown of the family. It could be communities that aren't strong like they once were.

And it's the voice is that if you say masculinity, the only word that can modify that is toxic masculinity. So you have a whole bunch of men who are, they're drawn to often secular voices that will give them permission to kind of have a dream and a passion and a strength as a man. And some of those voices are really, you know, damaging like an entertain.

And then others of them like a Jordan Peterson or something are doing some some good. So we have an opportunity as pastors thinking about speaking to young men to really give them that call. So I'm not surprised that you find maybe some of these men are hearing it for the first time.

It's a reminder to me as a pastor. Am I doing that in my own congregation? Because if we don't give a godly call for a man of God to lead in a godly, humble, strong, sacrificial way, they either won't hear it or they'll hear somebody else say, yes, go out and be a man and it'll be the world's definition instead of the Bible. Right.

That's right. Yeah. And it's not just it's not just giving them the precept, it's giving them the example.

And so I think we've got elders and pastors have got to let young men into their life. You know, Rosario talks about hospitality is letting people across the threshold of your life. And I think we've got to do that.

We were talking about our friend and mentors earlier. And one of the things they did was

let me end of their life so that I could actually see how they led their family. They could actually see these kind of characteristics come out.

You know, it's interesting that Paul at the end of 1 Corinthians when he's exhorting them. And he uses this phrase which, you know, as you said, if the only adjective for masculine is toxic, when Paul says act like men, and then he says let all that you do be done in love. So in the apostles mind, in Christ's revelation of his will, love and act in like men are not too opposite things.

And I think we've got to model that. We've got to teach that for the younger generation. Yeah, that's really good.

One other alliteration, and I liked it, you said the man of God must be appointed and anointed. So this this unction, and I've often, it's a little hobby horse of mine, is I just, I don't hear people, but maybe I'm hearing it more, and your book is evidence of that. Talk about the unction and preaching, and that's just another word for anointing.

So what do you mean by that? And how do we grow in that spirit-empowered preaching? It sounds good, and it can sound so ethereal. What does it really mean and how do we get there? Yeah, well, the point I try to make is, you know, I love Lloyd Jones's emphasis on unction, and I make the point that I differ with him on his formulation of the baptism of the spirit. Yes, please do.

But I'm not, but I don't necessarily differ with him on the phenomena. No, where he's going to next out, right? Yeah, right. So that, I mean that book, the Lloyd Jones book on preaching is, I mean it's just classic, and it's so formative for so many of us, but on his formulation of baptism of the spirit, I think it was Packard in another book he was doing a blurb on Lloyd Jones.

He said, it's just as well he got this wrong, or people might have thought he was inherent. So I want to differ with that, but I don't want to disagree with that the power, the palpable power of the presence of the spirit in preaching, and I think it's lacking. But I don't think, so when I talk about the anointing, the point I would make is in Christ you already have it.

You already have the anointing of the Holy Spirit. That's a done deal. And he says that of all believers you have the anointing.

I think the responsibility for Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18 of every Christian is, you know, as it was put to me in my class, the question is not, do we have the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit have us? And Ephesians 5-18 it's an imperative that we have to be filled with the spirit. Well if that's true of every believer, my point is how much more than of the man of God who's stewarding the Word of God. And I don't think that the fullness of the Holy Spirit comes through fanaticism or sinfulness.

It comes through an earnest, and this is where I think we may be missing something. Earnest faith filled use of the means of grace. I think there's a way for us to talk about the ordinary means of grace of what we mean is ordinary I don't expect much.

And I don't think that's what ordinary means. Ordinary means means. And I think what we can do just like we can pervert our Calvinism and evangelism into complacency.

I think when it comes to the ordinary means of grace, we can kind of have a fire and forget approach rather than these are the means by which God administers his grace to me. And so when I'm earnest, I'm looking to Christ in faith as I engage these. And I think that and as I engage that as I engage the means and engage Christ through the means then I'm repenting and I'm believing and I'm growing.

And I think the preacher has the amazing opportunity and responsibility to do that all week. All week. And so I think what should show up in the pulpit is a spirit filled man of God.

I think that's what I mean. And again, I was going to come through personality. You guys are different.

I don't think that the fullness of the spirit is that personality manifestation versus that. I think it's what happens in the congregation. I'm glad you said all that because there's another one of the big takeaways from the book and I was actually going to ask you about it.

You said that word expectation. Expectation and preaching and expectation with the ordinary means of grace. I do think it is a danger especially in reformed tradition.

I think Paul Miller says something like this in his book on praying that you always have to balance the seek, ask, and knock and the not my will but yours be done. And I do think sometimes and maybe I'm just speaking on my own heart experience. I can really run to the not my will but yours be done.

You pray. I'm praying but you're in charge. Do what you want.

And there's a good humble that's a right attitude but it can sometimes circumvent am I actually pleading, knocking, asking, expecting. What encouragement do you have for pastors starting out but it may be in particular pastors who have been doing this for a couple of decades who feel like hey I had that when I was 26 and now I'm just trying to make it to 65 or 70 and my sense of expectation is gone. Yeah.

Yeah. Well I think when you go through seasons don't you, valleys and peaks in your ministry. So I'm going to give you, I'm going to use an alliteration and then I'm going to go back and tell Rhonda Kevin said he liked it so I'm going to do this more.

So it's I think what happens is that contentment or conviction about the sovereignty of God gets perverted in the embers of corruption and still remain in our heart that contentment and conviction where Lord your will be done and I know that the results are not up to me. They're up to you according to your sovereign will. That contentment can get perverted into complacency.

I just don't care anymore. And we might not put it in that language but it becomes a wrong kind of John Murray has this amazing quote, amazing statement in his on Romans 10 1 in his commentary where I'm not going to get his language right but he talks about not that when we allow this doctrine of the sovereignty of God to cause us to not be concerned and he's commenting on Paul says my heart's desire and prayer to God for them to be saved as he comes off Romans 9. He said when we try to we take the divine prerogative and it makes us complacent. That's a perversion of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

And then as you know the Lord's led me into I just I love the old Princeton guys and I'm Alexander and Miller and I started finding the language of desire, success and expect it. Now they're not meaning numerical success. They're not meaning somehow they're abandoning their Calvinism and saying we think that you control what happens from the pulpit but they're saying if you love the glory of God and you love the people you're preaching to and you know the word of God is what is effectual to affect the purposes of God.

You should want that to happen and because you believe God's a good and gracious God that he's going to do those kind of things. So I think that we need to recover that aspiration while we humbly submit to the sovereignty of God and we don't measure success by our numbers. That's up to the Lord.

But it is interesting that Luke gives you a lot of numbers because he's showing you that Jesus is accomplishing the promise and we should desire that. So you know what if you've lost that? I think the only way to recover it, maybe not the only way to recover it but I think you have to get with the Lord. I think you have to go back to the means of grace and you have to confess it to the Lord and you have to ask the Lord to renew your mind and use those means of grace in various contexts to ask the Lord to renew your heart, to revitalize your heart as you ask him to revitalize your church.

This was a great paragraph here and it's related to all of this. You were talking about the power for a man of God and you said the remedy for powerlessness in pastoral ministry and you give three points, earnestly study God's word, engage in earnest prayer and worship when you are at worship which are really what you said, the means of grace. You have this paragraph here, for numerous reasons such as fatigue, over familiarity, discouragement, doubt, over appetite for the pleasures of this age, pastors can stop responding to the living God who relates to them by his spirit through his scriptures.

We must respond to the word through faith in the promises and purposes of God, repentance, new obedience, praise, joy and reforming our attitudes and actions and our lives and leadership. It's in the context of this rich indwelling of the word that pastors have communion with God and are filled with his spirit. That's so good.

John, just, I know lots of people listening to this aren't pastors but you and I have a, I mean we are pastors and I love pastors I know you do too and have a burden for pastors so just speak to the pastor who's listening to this or maybe it's someone who just wants to know how to pray for their pastor and they really feel this powerlessness right now and they have this discouragement, over familiarity, all these things you list. Give a word of hope and encouragement to the pastor who's feeling that as we're recording this on Monday morning and maybe they're listening to this come Wednesday. Yeah, I think I go to Galatians 2.20 and the life I live, I now live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.

So I think the first place that we, if I can use the old word the first place we repair when we recognize our failings is not to our performance but we repair, I can't tell you how many times in pastoral ministry have had to say, Lord, I'm just not an effective or even faithful shepherd. I claim the righteousness of the chief shepherd alone. I think that's the first place we go.

And then Christ lives in me. Lord, would you renew my faith that I might grow more into your image. It's just becoming more like Christ in front of people.

And I think we have to have faith that the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 3, that passage, 20 and 21, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine according to the power that is at work within us. I'm convinced from working through that passage, Kevin, that's talking about sanctification, unto glorification, just because of the context. And I think pastors have to believe that for themselves, not just for their congregation.

That God's not done working on me. And so when we recognize failings, we recognize sin, we recognize weaknesses, we lean on the righteousness of Christ who gave himself for us. We depend upon the spirit of Christ who is dwell within us.

And we ask Him to do more than we can ask or imagine right now. I can't imagine doing this right now. So Lord, would you do it? I think that's where I would go.

That's good. Just bring this to a close here. It's a great book.

It's called The Pastor is Leader. It's about preaching about leadership. Put you on the spot a little bit, John.

Do you have? You already mentioned Lloyd Jones. What are some of the books on your top three to five preaching books and top three to five leadership books? Do you have a

few that just jump to the top? Oh boy. Well, top three to five leadership books.

You know, I commend Harry's material to people. Embers to a flame and 3D leadership. Al Moller's book, Conviction to Lead.

I found really helpful. It was really helpful to me. And one of the things I like about Moller's book is that when I would give it to guys in the church who were leaders in other spheres, they found it really useful.

So it was helpful for equipping leaders. In terms of preaching, the Lloyd Jones book, I recommend, you know, some of the books that I assign here, Dennis Johnson's Henry Proplain, really helps with the Christ-centered hermeneutic in preaching. John Piper's the supremacy of God in preaching is a standard that we assign.

I really do like Jonathan Griffith's preaching in the New Testament. So those are just a smattering of the ones that I assign here. That's great.

John, thanks for coming on. And again, I encourage everybody, Pastor or not, get this book. Look, you have a blurb by Jason Halapolis on the back and a forward by Sinclair Ferguson.

So it really is a good book and I'm glad Crossway published it. The Pastor is leader, principles and practices for connecting preaching and leadership. John, thanks for being on the podcast.

Kevin, thanks very much. You're very kind to have me on. Yeah, enjoy it.

Well, appreciate your friendship and the ministry that you're doing. Pastoring and leading there, the PT program at Westminster, lots of mutual friends. So thank you all for listening and until next time, glorify God.

Enjoy him forever and read a good book.