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First Belton

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Series: We ARE Church

Title: We are Led

Text(s): Judges 21:25; Acts 20:28; 1 Sam 8:7; Eph 1:22-23; Matt 28:18; 1 Pt 5:2-3; Heb 13:17; Acts 6:2-3; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:11–13 (*plus several scriptures in the “charts”*)

Theme: We are a community of disciples who take personal responsibility to *lead all generations to know and follow Jesus* as we grow in maturity and service according to His design.

WELCOME & PRAYER

Good morning, everyone! Great to be with you today. Before we begin, I just want to remind you of our e-bulletin – it’s the best way to stay connected to all that’s happening here at First Belton. You should receive a text every Sunday morning with the link, or you can scan the QR code on the Connect Card in front of you. Everything you need – from updates on ministries to project details – is right there.

INTRODUCTION

Let me begin with an important question: Who’s the boss around here? When it comes to the Church, specifically, our church—who’s in charge?

Now, that question might sound simple, but it’s one that has sparked centuries of debate. Books have been written, denominations have divided, and entire movements have formed around how authority should function in the church.

Some of you may have walked in today confident in your answer. Others might be confused – or even think, “Does it really matter?”

It matters deeply. Here’s why:

1. God is a God of order, not chaos. He has designed His Church to reflect His character.
2. You have a role to play in that design.

So today, I want to show you how God designed His Church to be led, and why that matters for every single one of us. Get ready... it is a lot of Scripture. Ready to go?

WHEN THERE IS NO AUTHORITY

Before we talk about how God designed authority, let’s look at what happens when there isn’t any.

The book of Judges ends with a haunting statement:

"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

(Judges 21:25)

When there's no clear authority, chaos reigns. Everyone becomes their own boss – and that never ends well.

That's why authority, rightly practiced, is not oppressive; it's protective. It brings order, accountability, and flourishing.

1. GOD OWNS THE CHURCH

Acts 20:28 says: *"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which He obtained with His own blood."*

That verse reminds us – God owns the Church.

I'll never forget the time Jordan and I paid off our first vehicle. There was a real sense of freedom in that moment. Why? Because it was ours – paid for in full.

In the same way, God has fully paid for His Church – not with money, but with the blood of His Son. He doesn't lease the Church. He owns it outright.

And when you own something, you set the rules.

That's where Israel often went wrong. When they demanded a king instead of trusting God's leadership, God told Samuel, *"They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them."* (1 Samuel 8:7)

Whenever leaders – or members – reject God's rule, confusion and division follow. So, the first truth is this: This church is not mine. It's not yours. It's God's.

2. JESUS RULES AS THE HEAD

Ephesians 1:22–23 says: *"And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body."*

Jesus is not only Savior – He is Head. He is the ruler over the Church.

In Matthew 28:18, He says, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."* That means Jesus has full authority over His Church.

Think of it like the brain to the body. The body can only function properly when it responds to the direction of the head. If the spinal cord is severed, the rest of the body fails to move.

Likewise, when a church disconnects from Christ – when we stop listening to His Word – it begins to lose life.

Every decision, every ministry, every leader is accountable to Christ's authority. He rules through His Word and by His Spirit.

And under that authority, He delegates leadership – not for control, but for care. Jesus gives His authority to three groups in the local church: elders, deacons, and members.

3. ELDERS LEAD AS SHEPHERDS

1 Peter 5:2–3 says: *“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”*

Notice that elders are called to shepherd God's people, not their own. They are stewards, not owners.

Here's how elders shepherd the church:

- Lead the flock through vision and direction (1 Pt 5:2-3)
- Feed the flock through faithful teaching and correction (Titus 1:9)
- Guard the flock from false teaching and harm (Acts 20:28-31)
- Care for the flock with compassion and presence (Acts 20:35)

And Hebrews 13:17 reminds us that elders are accountable: *“They are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.”*

Eldership isn't about power – it's about responsibility. The qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are high because souls are at stake.

4. DEACONS LEAD THROUGH SERVICE

While elders lead through shepherding, deacons lead through serving.

In Acts 6, the early church was growing quickly, and with that growth came new needs. The apostles realized they couldn't do everything, so they said: *“It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables... Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”* (Acts 6:2–3)

Deacons were appointed to meet practical needs so that the elders could focus on spiritual needs.

Here's how deacons serve the church:

- Oversee ministries of care and logistics (Acts 6:1-3)
- Coordinate volunteers and resources (Acts 6:3-4)
- Serve widows and the vulnerable (Acts 6:1)
- Diffuse conflict before it spreads (Acts 6:1-7)
- Protect the elders' ability to focus on prayer and teaching (Acts 6:2-4)

If elders are like shepherds, deacons are like servants who keep the flock moving forward – they make ministry possible.

5. MEMBERS LEAD THROUGH MINISTRY

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:27: *"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."*

When you became a Christian, you didn't just join a crowd – you joined a body. And every part of the body has a purpose.

Ephesians 4:11–13 says Christ gave leaders to the church *"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..."*

That means ministry is not the job of the few – it's the calling of all.

Here's what members do:

- Guard the gospel (Gal. 1:6–9)
- Practice restoration and accountability (Matt. 18:15–20)
- Affirm and nominate leaders (Acts 6:3)
- Participate in key decisions (Acts 15:22)
- Preserve unity (Eph. 4:3)

Every member matters. Every gift counts. Every act of service helps the whole body grow to maturity.

A SIMPLE PICTURE

Role	Function	Focus	Biblical Image
Elders	Lead by teaching & oversight	Spiritual needs	Shepherds guiding the flock
Deacons	Lead by serving & action	Practical needs	Servants propelling the mission
Members	Lead by participation & partnership	Shared ministry	The flock following the Shepherd together

CONCLUSION

So, who's the boss around here?

- God owns the Church.
- Christ rules as Head.
- Elders shepherd.
- Deacons serve.
- Members minister.

And when the Church operates this way – under Christ's authority, with shared responsibility – it reflects God's design, protects the gospel, and propels His mission forward.

This is how we *lead all generations to know and follow Jesus*.