

Ordained by God: The Gift of Pastors

Acts 20:17-28

Scripture for Today

""Acts 20:17-28

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.""

Introduction: Nathan Holmes to Pastor

Church family, today is a very special day. We are here to recognize and ordain my good friend and co-laborer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Nathan Holmes, as a pastor here at True Words Baptist Church.

If you are in Nathan's family or a friend visiting for Nathan today, please stand up. All of those people right there are a reason Nathan is here and being ordained as a pastor today. They played a part in the man that Nathan has become today.

Now, ordination is not just a ceremony, and it is not just a tradition. It is a biblical act where a church sets apart a man for the office that God has already called him to. I know that God has called Nathan to be a pastor.

This is a joyful day for our church, but it is also a serious day. Because the office of a pastor is not a man-made invention. It is God's design. And when we do this today, we want to do it exactly as the Bible says.

So this morning I want to give you a simple three-point message:

1. First, the Bible shows us that bishops, elders, and pastors are all the same office.
2. Second, the Bible shows us that there are only two offices in the local church.
3. And third, the Bible shows us that a church is to have multiple pastors — pastors are God's gift to the church.

Point 1 – Bishop, Elder, Pastor = Same Office

There is a lot of confusion in the world today about church leadership. Some people think a bishop is one office, an elder is another office, and a pastor is still another. But the Bible shows us these are simply three different words describing the same role.

Turn with me to Acts chapter 20. I want you to see this closely today. We slow down here at this church and we study the Scriptures.

""Acts 20:17-18

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,""

So we see the Bible, written through the Holy Ghost who is God, says: "He sent to Ephesus." So this is the church at Ephesus. It's one church: the church at Ephesus. The "ELDERS" of the church are called. Paul is going to speak with them. Paul is an apostle, which is a higher office ordained by God. Paul taught these elders of this church right there.

""Acts 20:28-29

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.""

Notice the exact words of the Scriptures. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God."

Elders of the church are overseers of the flock. What does that sound like? It's sounds like pastors who care for the flock. The job of a pastor is to feed the church of God. That's what I'm doing right now. How? With the Word of God—with the Scriptures. This is our daily bread.

The elders, multiple, of the church are called overseers. They are commanded to pastor the flock.

We see this same thing in Titus chapter 1. Let's turn there.

""Titus 1:5-9

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of

one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.""

If you look closely there, you'll see the Paul commanding Timothy to ordain elders in every city. And then we see requirements to become an elder: blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. And then look at verse 7 closely.

"For a bishop." The Bible is calling a bishop and elder. The words there are interchangeable. In Acts chapter 20, we saw overseers and elders. Now we see bishops. This word means overseer. They all go together. A bishop must be blameless, a steward of God, not selfwilled but seeking God's will, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful word.

He must be able by sound doctrine to exhort and convince the gainsayers. So, a bishop is an elder is an overseer is a pastor of the church of God. Let's look at 1 Peter Chapter 5. Let's turn there.

""1 **Peter 5:1-4**

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.""

Plural elders right there at the beginning of the verse. Peter is an elder. He commands the elders to feed the flock of God and to take oversight thereof. We see the same things. A pastor is a shepherd. We aren't the chief Shepherd, but our job is very important. And it's a tough job and a very serious job.

We aren't lords over God's heritage—not dictators like some pastors believe themselves to be. We aren't to dominate and intimidate because this church is God's church purchased by Jesus Christ—not purchased by a pastor. We are stewards, not owners. A pastor leads by example. A pastor shows the flock what a faithful husband should look like, what prayer looks like, what courage looks like.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

A pastor does have authority but it doesn't come from lording over people but from living what he preaches. We don't dominate. We remember whose church it is. We lead by example. We aren't perfect, but we're going to try our best to do things right.

So, when we line all of this up in the Bible, we see an unmistakable truth: bishop, elder, and pastor are not three different offices in the church. They are three different titles for one office. Today, Nathan Holmes will be ordained into this office of pastor for True Words Baptist Church.

Point 2 – Only Two Offices in the Church

Now let's look at the structure of the church as this is very important. How many offices does the New Testament give?

""Philippians 1:1

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:""

Two offices are mentioned: bishops and deacons. Not three. Not four. Just two. And you see this is one church with BISHOPS and DEACONS – plural. They didn't have just one bishop and one deacon. They had multiples. We'll do it this same way with these two offices.

There is no office of evangelist within the church. There are pastors and deacons who evangelize. The only evangelist mentioned in the Bible was one of the first seven deacons. He preached the Gospel just as our Deacon here preaches the Gospel.

And we see the same thing in 1 Timothy 3 regarding the qualifications for only two offices.

""1 Timothy 3:1-13

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.""

So according to the Bible, a local church is to have two offices: 1) pastors, who are also called bishops and elders, and 2) deacons, who serve the church in a supporting role.

Deacons take care of physical and material needs. Pastors take care of spiritual needs — feeding, leading, and guarding the flock. At this point, after this church being in existence for almost a

year, we now, as of today, have two pastors and a deacon. Gary Tapp is our deacon here. Nathan Holmes and myself are pastors here.

That's God's design, and it is simple and clear. Some people may say, "Do you really need two pastors and a deacon?" In a year, we have over 1,000 people on our list that we would like to stay in touch with and serve here at this church. I can't do that. So we really need more pastors and more deacons. As this church grows, God will send those people and this church will increase.

For example, God gives special gifts to pastors and deacons. When deacons were ordained, the word of God increased. For example, our deacon here increases the word of God. He contacts people. He visits people. He preaches the Gospel. He gets people saved. He serves the church and the people. Having a deacon is a great thing.

Having another pastor is a great thing. Having more pastors and more deacons is a great thing. But there are many pastors out there who only want one pastor—themselves. Why? Because they believe that to be God's model. The Bible doesn't say this anywhere. It's actually teaching the opposite.

""3 John 9-11

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.""

For example, I don't need the preeminence or belief that I am superior to the rest of you. I am not superior to Nathan. Who is superior to all of us?

""Colossians 1:17-18

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.""

It's a great thing to have Nathan here with me as a pastor of this church. People will say: "You can only have one pastor." Who said so? The Bible sure doesn't say so. Because of Nathan, this church will increase. God ordained.

We have the two God ordained offices being filled within this church. And we'll continue to grow and increase the word of God in this local area and all over the world. Why? Because we are following God's model—not man's model. We are not lifting ourselves up, but we are following God's model to lift Him up.

Point 3 – A Church Has Multiple Pastors (God's Gift to Churches)

The next thing the Bible shows us is that each local church is not meant to have only one pastor, but multiple pastors. We talked about this some already, but I want to show you more. And I want you to know by having multiple pastors we are strengthening ourselves according to God's word.

""Acts 14:23

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.""

Plural ELDERS in every church.

""Acts 15:4

And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.""

One church and multiple elders in that one church.

""Acts 15:22

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:""

The Scriptures are very clear on this matter and on this doctrine. A church has multiple elders.

""James 5:14

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:""

Everywhere we look, the pattern for pastors, bishops, or elders is plurality – more than one. God designed His flock in New Testament churches to be shepherded by more than one man.

And this makes sense. Shepherding is a heavy responsibility. No one man has all the gifts, all the time, for all the needs. But together, pastors can share the load, balance each other out, and give the church greater strength.

And this is not just practical, it is biblical.

""Ephesians 4:11-12

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:""

Pastors are a gift of Christ to the church. They are given for your growth, your equipping, and your edification.

So when we ordain Nathan today, we are not creating something new as many might believe. We are simply recognizing God's gift, strengthening this body of believers, and following the biblical pattern. And we ask right now for God to bless Nathan Holmes as a pastor for this church. We ask God to bless this church. We're going to do the absolute best that we can do.

Conclusion to Ordained of God: The Gift of Pastors

So let's bring it all together. The Bible shows us clearly that bishop, elder, and pastor are the same office. The Bible shows us there are only two offices in the local church — pastors and deacons who are to be evangelists or preachers of the Gospel.

And the Bible shows us that each church is to have multiple pastors, given as a gift of Christ to build up His people. We do the work of God here every week and throughout the week. We do not stop. God gave us the gift of another pastor.

And look, it's not common to find a man who meets the qualifications of a bishop, elder, or pastor. He's never been divorced. He has faithful children — one is being baptized today because he believes and he knows. Nathan has been doing the work of a pastor here.

Today we rejoice that God has given us another pastor. Nathan has been faithful, he has been examined, and he has been called. We are setting him apart publicly to the office God has already called him to.

To Nathan, this is a high calling and a sacred trust. Be faithful to feed the flock, to guard the doctrine, and to lead by example. To the church here today, receive him as God's gift. Pray for him, encourage him, follow his leadership as he follows Christ.

And together, let's remember: there is only one Chief Shepherd — the Lord Jesus Christ. When He shall appear, He will give a crown of glory that fadeth not away to every faithful pastor. I want Nathan to know that today. "The elders which are among you... feed the flock of God, taking oversight thereof, willingly, being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory." This is a serious office and a serious job.

The Gospel Message

I want to tell you about the Gospel that Nathan preaches, that his Dad preaches, that my Dad preaches, that his Mom preached that we miss greatly, that my Mom preaches, that his wife preaches, that my wife preaches, that my daughters preach, that his sons and daughters will preach, that the men, women, and children of this church preach, the Gospel that I preach, and most importantly, the Gospel Abraham, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul preached.

If you love Nathan today, I want you to listen to this short Gospel message that I have for you today. This is the exact same thing that Nathan would tell you.

1. We're all sinners. We sin every day. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."
2. There's a penalty for our sin. "For the wages of sin is death." There is a second death. If we had to pay for our sins, we would die and go to hell.
3. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God wants us in heaven so He sent Jesus Christ to pay our penalty. Jesus is THE SACRIFICE for our sins. Not us. Not our good works. Not our good life.
4. Our penalty is death and hell. Jesus, the Son of God and God in the flesh, came and paid for our sins. He fully paid for every sin. The Bible says "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He took every sin that you'll ever commit, in your entire life, from birth to death, and He paid for it – no matter how big the sin. He paid it all.
5. Jesus died on the cross because our penalty is death. The soul of Jesus was not left in hell the Bible clearly says multiple times and prophecies about in Jonah. For 3 days and 3 nights, Jesus was dead. He paid the penalty for you and I.
6. And He arose from the dead conquering death and hell so we don't have to go.
7. The one thing that you have to do to be saved from hell is not go to church, repent of your sins, ask forgiveness, get baptized, give offering, or anything else; it's to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. What does that mean? Put it all on Him to save you and not yourself, not your obedience, not your great life, BUT JESUS. I promise you right now that He can save you right now without your help. He doesn't need your help. HE IS THE SAVIOR. He simply wants you to give up all those others things that you're trusting in right now and believe on Him alone.
9. Just give it and give it over to Jesus Christ. Trust that He alone saves. He is the Savior. You can't even stop death from coming for you. You won't be able to stop hell. But Jesus can and did. Change your mind right now and put all 100% of your faith on Him.
10. Right now, I ask you a question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, can save you forever, right now? If Jesus can't do it, no one can do it. I know He can do it. He did it for me. Someone who definitely doesn't deserve it. He did it for me. There's nothing special about me. If He did it for me, He'll do it for you. Jesus hears your thoughts.
11. Once you believe on Jesus alone, He gives you everlasting life. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. If you've believed in the past or if you've believed today, you have everlasting life. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life." If it's everlasting, it's forever. If you have it now, it doesn't end.
12. These are not my words. These are God's words to you today. You must believe that you have everlasting life through Jesus Christ and not through yourself. God keeps salvation for you. You don't. He keeps you saved. You don't. If you beleive that today, you're saved forever and heaven is your final destination. God bless you.

Ordination Service for Nathan Holmes to Pastor

I'm going to tell you a little bit about Nathan. We had a church in Shelbyville, KY that we called True Words Christian Church. We started that church in 2019. I was ordained a deacon in another church prior to that and I left that church over a works based salvation. That pastor preached that you have to keep working for salvation until you've earned it.

I wasn't an ordained pastor at the time. But I knew that God called me to lead a church. So I went on a journey to be ordained as a pastor the Biblical way – and sought another pastor to ordain me. "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." The pastor made an agreement with me to ordain me in two years. So I moved across the country because I had a great desire to be a pastor and I thought I could trust that man.

As soon as we were moved into our home across on the other side of the country, in March of 2023, a man named Nathan Holmes called me. I am sure he remembers the call. He had been searching for good churches in the area in Kentucky and couldn't find any. He was thinking of starting a church and thought the name might be True Word. So he searched and he ended up finding True Words Christian Church in Shelbyville, KY.

He called me, but I wasn't in Shelbyville, KY. I had just moved to the other side of the country. If I would have met Nathan prior to that, I probably would have never moved. I immediately invited Nathan and his family to come soul winning with us on a trip we were taking to Detroit, Michigan. Nathan was busy, but I promised him that the trip would change his life. He made the trip with Milana, the kids, and Rachel came too in April of 2023.

And we went soul winning together for several days. And many people were saved out there preaching the Gospel. That's the first time I met Nathan in person.

I told Nathan about my Dad and Mom in Shelbyville, KY and Nathan and his family continued to have church in the same place where True Words Christian Church was located. None of this is a coincidence. They continued meeting together. Goddard and Jane came. Caleb and Rachel came. Others came.

I wasn't going to come back to Kentucky. Shelbyville, KY is a tough area for the Gospel – not many wanted to hear. I was actually planning to pastor very small church in Seattle, Washington once ordained.

Now we fast forward to about a year later. Nathan has a great desire to do the work of God. He takes a trip to stay with us in Washington, He stayed with us for about six weeks in our home. And this is when everything changed. The pastor who had made an agreement with me changed his part of the deal completely. He wanted to ordain me as an evangelist instead of a pastor. I don't agree with that as the Bible doesn't have the office of evangelist in a church.

I told that pastor about West Louisville and he said something like: "Why would you want to go there? There's just black people there." And I knew that was the end of it for me. I will not be a

part of that AT ALL. He also told me that I have to skip over homes with pride flags or black lives matter signs. I'm not skipping over anyone. I don't have to continue with someone like that.

So, Nathan showed me he's the real deal of a man who loves God. We talked to Pastor Tim DeVries of Vision Valley Baptist Church on a phone call. He said if I came and trained under him for some time that he would be interested in ordaining me as a pastor to West Louisville. I didn't know everything about pastor Tim's background.

Later I found out that he had always wanted to have a church in West Louisville. So we thought about it for a few days. We prayed for God to open doors and close doors.

Nathan drove his family to Seattle as I was on a preaching trip to Seattle and then to Canada. We had a phone call with pastor Tim. I told him I would follow his plan to be ordained. I had already tried that once so I was taking another chance but I had known Tim for about 4 to 5 years. We should be able to trust the words of a pastor. And Tim can be trusted. So I immediately packed up and moved. And it was the best decision I've made.

We found this building and property immediately in the exact location that I searched for. I showed my wife on a map. I said, "This is the exact location that we want to be. Let's see if there's a building available there." And this building you're in right now popped up for sale. My Dad and Mom came and looked at it. Nathan came and looked at it. I wasn't moved back yet, but I put the offer in before I ever saw it in person. I knew this was God's will.

And Nathan and his entire family has been with us through all of this. He works hard. He cares for people. And I know Nathan and I are meant to work together the rest of our lives. If something happens to me, he's here. If something happens to him, I'm here. And I'll do my absolute best and give it all I've got for his family. They are my family.

This all didn't just happen. This is God's hand in all of this. We closed on this property on a very important date that I knew nothing about. God's hand was all over this. And I know it to be right because of all the salvations, the baptisms, and the people who are coming here. We love the people in this area. Many are here right now, and they know that we love them.

Nathan has been with me faithfully doing the work of God since that first phone call over 2.5 years ago. I want to ask Nathan to please come stand over here on the stage with me. Let's pray for this ordination to pastor right now as a church.

"Father God, we pray right now as a church with friends and family here today that you bless the rest of this service and the rest of the time we have here together. We know you have called Nathan to be a Pastor here at this church. He's already been doing the work of a Pastor. We pray for him now that you will greatly bless him in this office, protect him and his family as only you can do, and keep him going here for many decades spreading the truth of your words to this community and to the ends of this earth. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

At this time, I'm going to ask my Dad, Deacon for this church, and Nathan's Dad, Goddard, to please come forward to the stage.

Nathan Holmes, meets all the qualifications for the office of Pastor, Elder, or Bishop.

I want to provide this signed KJV 1611 Bible to Nathan as a gift from this church and present the certificate of ordination (read the certificate).

Nathan, please come stand here beside me. Dad and Goddard, please lay your hands on Nathan as we ordain him today to the office of pastor (Dad to pray first, then Goddard, then myself).

We now present to you Pastor Nathan Holmes. Nathan, please address the congregation.

Have someone from Nathan's family say the final prayer as we all stand there together on stage.

Have Nathan's family come to the front.

Sing one more song and pray. I will lead the last song.

Get pictures with everyone at the front of the church together.

Nathan to now baptize Josef!