

"9Marks, as a ministry, has taken basic biblical teaching about the church and put it into the hands of pastors. Bobby, by way of these study guides, has taken this teaching and delivered it to the person in the pew. I am unaware of any other tool that so thoroughly and practically helps Christians understand God's plan for the local church. I can't wait to use these studies in my own congregation."

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"Bobby Jamieson has done local church pastors an incredible service by writing these study guides. Clear, biblical, and practical, they introduce the biblical basis for a healthy church. But more importantly, they challenge and equip church members to be part of the process of improving their own church's health. The studies work for individual, small group, and larger group settings. I have used them for the last year at my own church and appreciate how easy they are to adapt to my own setting. I don't know of anything else like them. Highly recommended!"

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"In America today we have the largest churches in the history of our nation, but the least amount of impact for Christ's kingdom. Slick marketing and finely polished vision statements are a foundation of sand. The 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides series is a refreshing departure from church-growth materials, towards an in-depth study of God's Word that will equip God's people with his vision for his Church. These study guides will lead local congregations to abandon secular methodologies for church growth and instead rely on Christ's principles for developing healthy, God-honoring assemblies."

**Carl J. Broggi**, Senior Pastor, Community Bible Church, Beaufort, South Carolina; President, Search the Scriptures Radio Ministry

"Anyone who loves Jesus will love what Jesus loves. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus loves the church. He knows about and cares for individual churches and wants them to be spiritually healthy and vibrant. Not only has Jesus laid down his life for the church but he has also given many instructions in his Word regarding how churches are to live and function in the world. This series of Bible studies by 9Marks shows how Scripture teaches these things. Any Christian who works through this curriculum, preferably with other believers, will be helped to see in fresh ways the wisdom, love, and power of God in establishing the church on earth. These studies are biblical, practical, and accessible. I highly recommend this curriculum as a useful tool that will help any church embrace its calling to display the glory of God to a watching world."

**Thomas Ascol**, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church of Cape Coral, Florida; Executive Director, Founders Ministries

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*Built upon the Rock: The Church*

*Hearing God's Word: Expository Preaching*

*The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*

*God's Good News: The Gospel*

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*Reaching the Lost: Evangelism*

*Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

*Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*

*Growing One Another: Discipleship in the Church*

*Leading One Another: Church Leadership*



# LEADING ONE ANOTHER: CHURCH LEADERSHIP

**Bobby Jamieson**

**Mark Dever, General Editor**

**Jonathan Leeman, Managing Editor**



**HEALTHY CHURCH STUDY GUIDES**

**CROSSWAY**  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*Leading One Another: Church Leadership*

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	7
An Important Mark of a Healthy Church: Biblical Church Leadership, <i>by Mark Dever</i>	9
<b>WEEK 1</b>	
Is Authority Bad?	15
<b>WEEK 2</b>	
God, the Shepherd of His People	19
<b>WEEK 3</b>	
Elders: Ministers of the Word and Shepherds of the Church	23
<b>WEEK 4</b>	
Finding the Right Men: Qualifications for Elders	27
<b>WEEK 5</b>	
Deacons: Servants of the Church	31
<b>WEEK 6</b>	
Your Responsibility for the Church	35
Teacher's Notes	39

# INTRODUCTION

What does the local church mean to you?

Maybe you love your church. You love the people. You love the preaching, the singing. You can't wait to show up on Sunday, and you cherish fellowship with other church members throughout the week.

Maybe the church is just a place you show up to a couple times a month. You sneak in late, duck out early.

We at 9Marks are convinced that the local church is God's plan for displaying his glory to the nations. And we want to help you catch and live out that vision, together with your whole church.

The 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides are a series of six- or seven-week studies on each of the "nine marks of a healthy church" plus one introductory study. These nine marks are the core convictions of our ministry. To provide a quick introduction to them, we've included a chapter from Mark Dever's book *What Is a Healthy Church?* with each study. We don't claim that these nine marks are the most important things about the church or the only important things about the church. But we do believe that they are biblical and therefore are helpful for churches.

So, in these studies, we're going to work through the biblical foundations and practical applications of each one. The ten studies are:

- *Built upon the Rock: The Church* (the introductory study)
- *Hearing God's Word: Expository Preaching*
- *The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*
- *God's Good News: The Gospel*
- *Real Change: Conversion*
- *Reaching the Lost: Evangelism*
- *Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

- *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*
- *Growing One Another: Discipleship in the Church*
- *Leading One Another: Church Leadership*

Each session of these studies takes a close look at one or more passages of Scripture and considers how it applies to the life of the whole church. So, we hope that these studies are equally appropriate for Sunday school, small groups, and other contexts where a group of anywhere from two to two-hundred people can come together and discuss God's Word.

These studies are mainly driven by observation, interpretation, and application questions, so get ready to speak up! We also hope that these studies provide opportunities for people to reflect together on their experiences in the church, whatever those experiences may be.

Leaders can make life much better or much worse, can't they? Think of loving parents who make countless sacrifices for their children's good, a gifted teacher who not only instructs but also inspires, a wise head of state who pursues justice and peace, a pastor who faithfully teaches, preaches, counsels, and cares for his people.

On the other hand, we are all too familiar with abusive or irresponsible parents, teachers who are lazy or uncaring, oppressive military dictators, and pastors who spout heresy and fleece their flocks.

In view of these abuses, the first session in this study answers the question, is authority bad? Next, we take a look at God's revelation of himself as the Shepherd of his people and how God calls his people's leaders to image him. The remaining sessions in the study consider individuals who have special responsibilities within the church: elders, deacons, and you.

Because it can be abused, leadership is a risky business for those in it and those under it. But God has good plans for leadership within the church. Let's explore those plans together and ask God to bless our churches with leaders—shepherds, in fact—after his own heart.

# AN IMPORTANT MARK OF A HEALTHY CHURCH: BIBLICAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

BY MARK DEVER

*(Originally published as chapter 13 of What Is a Healthy Church?)*

What kind of leadership does a healthy church have? Is it a congregation that strives to ensure that the gospel is faithfully preached? Yes (Galatians 1). Is it deacons who model service in the affairs of the church? Yes (Acts 6). Is it a pastor who is faithful in preaching the Word of God? Yes (2 Timothy 4). But the Bible presents one more leadership gift to churches to help them become healthy: the position of elder.

Surely there are many useful things we could say about church leadership from the Bible; yet I want to focus primarily on this question of elders, since I fear a lot of churches don't know what they're missing. As a pastor, I pray that Christ will place within our fellowships men whose spiritual gifts and pastoral concern indicate that God has called them to be elders. May he prepare many such men!

If God has so gifted a certain man in the church with exemplary character, pastoral wisdom, and gifts of teaching, and if, after prayer, the church recognizes these things, then he should be set apart as an elder.

## WHAT IS AN ELDER?

In Acts 6, the young church in Jerusalem began to bicker over how food was being distributed to widows. The apostles therefore called upon the church to select several men who could better oversee this

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

distribution. The apostles chose to delegate this particular task so that they could then “give [their] attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4 NIV).

That, in the briefest terms, appears to be the division of labor between elders and deacons that the rest of the New Testament develops. Elders are especially devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word for the church, while deacons help to sustain the church’s physical operations.

Are you beginning to see what a gift this is to you, churches? God is essentially saying, “I’m going to take several men from among you and set them aside to pray for you and to teach you about me.”

## ELDERS AND CONGREGATIONS

All churches have had individuals designated to perform the functions of elders, even if those individuals are called by other titles, such as deacon or director. The three New Testament titles for this office, which are used interchangeably, are *episkopos* (overseer or bishop), *presbuteros* (elder), and *poimain* (shepherd or pastor). All three are used for the same men, for instance, in Acts 20:17 and 20:28.

When evangelicals hear the word *elder*, however, many of them immediately think “Presbyterian.” Yet the first Congregationalists (capital C, pointing to a formal group of churches) back in the sixteenth century taught that eldership was an office for New Testament churches. Elders could also be found in Baptist churches in America throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. In fact, the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. B. Johnson, wrote a treatise in 1846 calling Baptist churches to use a plurality of elders since the practice was biblical.

Baptists and Presbyterians do disagree in two areas concerning elders (and I think the issues at play here are relevant to those who are not Baptist or Presbyterian). First and most fundamentally, we who are Baptists are congregationalists (lowercase c, referring to a practice). We believe that the Bible teaches that the final decision on matters rests with the congregation as a whole, not with a church’s elders or anyone outside the church body. When Jesus was teaching his disciples about confronting a sinful brother, he said that the con-

gregation was the final court of appeal—not the elders, not a bishop or pope, not a council or convention (Matt. 18:17). When the apostles sought out several men to act as deacons, as we just discussed, they gave the decision over to the congregation.

In Paul's letters, too, the congregation appears to assume final responsibility. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul blames not the pastor, elders, or deacons for tolerating a man's sin, but the congregation. In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul refers to what a majority of them had done in disciplining an erring member. In Galatians 1, Paul calls on the congregations themselves to judge the false teaching they had been hearing. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul reproves not just the false teachers but also those who paid them to teach what their itching ears wanted to hear. Elders lead, but they do so, biblically and necessarily, within the bounds recognized by the congregation. In that sense, elders and every other board or committee in a Baptist church act in what is finally an advisory capacity to the whole congregation.

Second, Baptists and Presbyterians have disagreed over the roles and responsibilities of elders, largely due to different understandings of the following words written by Paul for Timothy: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17 NIV). Presbyterians understand this verse to be establishing two classes of elders—ruling elders and teaching elders. Baptists don't recognize this formal division but understand the verse to suggest that certain individuals among a group of elders will simply be given more fully, as a practical matter, to preaching and teaching. After all, Paul clearly tells Timothy earlier in the letter that a basic qualification of every elder is that he is "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; see also Titus 1:9). Baptists, therefore, have often denied the appropriateness of appointing elders who are not capable of teaching Scripture.

### PLURALITY OF ELDERS

Where Baptists and Presbyterians often agreed in the eighteenth century was that there should be a plurality (or multiple number) of elders in each local church. The New Testament never suggests a specific number of elders for a particular congregation, but it clearly and

## **LEADING ONE ANOTHER**

consistently refers to the “elders” of a local church in the plural (for example, Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14).

Today, not only are more and more Baptist churches rediscovering this, but also churches from many other denominations, as well as independent churches, are increasingly recognizing this basic biblical idea.

A plurality of elders does not mean that the pastor has no distinctive role. There are many references in the New Testament to preaching and preachers that would not apply to all the elders in a congregation. In Corinth, for instance, Paul gave himself exclusively to preaching in a way that lay elders in a church could not (Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 4:13; 5:17). Also, preachers seemed to relocate to an area for the express purpose of preaching (Rom. 10:14–15), whereas elders seemed settled among the community (Titus 1:5).

As the regular voice that proclaims God’s Word, a faithful preacher will probably find that a congregation and the other elders treat him as the first among equals and “especially” worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17). Still, the preacher or pastor is, fundamentally, just one more elder, formally equal with every other man called by the congregation to act in this capacity.

## **BENEFITS OF ELDERS**

My own experience as a pastor has confirmed the usefulness of following the New Testament practice of sharing, wherever possible, the responsibility for pastoring a local church with other men rooted in the congregation.

Decisions involving the church but not requiring the attention of all the members should fall not to the pastor alone, but to the elders as a whole. This is sometimes cumbersome, but it has immense benefits. It rounds out the pastor’s gifts, making up for some of his defects and supplementing his judgment. It creates support in the congregation for decisions, helping unity and leaving leaders less exposed to unjust criticism. It makes leadership more rooted and permanent and allows for more mature continuity. It encourages the church to take more responsibility for its spirituality and helps make the church less dependent on its employees.

This practice of a plurality of elders is unusual among Baptist churches today, but there is a growing trend toward it among Baptists and many others—and for good reason. It was needed in New Testament churches and it is needed now.

### WHAT ABOUT DEACONS?

Many modern churches tend to confuse elders with either the church staff or the deacons. Deacons also fill a New Testament office, one rooted in Acts 6, as we saw. While any absolute distinction between the two offices is difficult, deacons are generally concerned with the practical details of church life: administration, maintenance, and the care of church members with physical needs. In many churches today, the deacons have either taken over the role of spiritual oversight or they have left it entirely in the hands of one man, the pastor. It would benefit churches to again distinguish the roles of elders and deacons. Do churches not need both types of servants?

### SHOULDERING THE BURDEN AND PRIVILEGE

Eldership is the biblical office that I hold as a pastor—I am the main preaching elder. But I work together with a group of elders for the edification of the church. Some are on staff, but the majority are not. We meet regularly to pray, to talk, and to form recommendations for the deacons or the whole church. It's difficult to put into words how much these men have loved both me and our entire congregation by sharing the burden—and privilege—of pastoring. I thank God regularly for these fellow workers.

Clearly, eldership is a biblical idea that has practical value. If implemented in our churches, it could help pastors immensely by removing weight from their shoulders and even removing their own petty tyrannies from their churches. Furthermore, the character qualities listed by Paul for eldership, aside from the ability to teach, are qualities every Christian should work toward (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Publicly affirming certain individuals as exemplary, then, helps to present a model for other Christians, especially Christian men. Indeed, the practice of recognizing godly, discerning, trusted laymen as elders is another mark of a healthy church.



# WEEK 1

## IS AUTHORITY BAD?

### GETTING STARTED

1. *What kind of authority relationships are you in? Whose authority are you under? Do you exercise authority over anyone?*

2. *What are some experiences with authority you've had that stand out to you? Were they good, bad, or ugly?*

Many people in our culture are highly suspicious of authority. After all, it can be used to oppress, abuse, and denigrate people. The fact that authority is so often abused has led some people to regard authority itself as inherently evil. But, as we'll see from Scripture in this study, authority itself is a good gift from God that images his rule over us.

### MAIN IDEA

Authority is a good gift from God that images his rule over us.

### DIGGING IN

In Daniel 4, God sends Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, out into the wilderness. God throws him down from his high place and causes him to live as a wild beast, so that he would know who was truly in charge in the universe. Here's what Nebuchadnezzar says at the end of that period:

<sup>34</sup> At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

<sup>35</sup> all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,  
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven  
and among the inhabitants of the earth;  
and none can stay his hand  
or say to him, “What have you done?” (Dan. 4:34–35)

1. *What does Nebuchadnezzar confess about God’s dominion and kingdom in this passage?*
2. *What does Nebuchadnezzar say about God’s relationship to people? How would you describe that relationship?*
3. *How does your heart react to this kind of language, to the idea that God rules over everything and does all that he pleases in heaven and on earth?*

In Genesis 1, we read about how God created the whole universe, including the earth and humankind. Here’s what God said when he created humans:

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26–28)

4. *In whose image is man created (v. 26)?*
5. *What does the fact of being made in the image of God mean for man’s relationship to creation (vv. 26, 28)?*
6. *What do we learn about authority from this passage?*

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

7. In a number of different places in Scripture, God gives special kinds of authority to specific groups of people. Read each of the following passages:

- Romans 13:1–7
- Ephesians 6:1–4
- Hebrews 13:7, 17

Answer the following questions about each passage:

- To whom does God grant authority?
- What does he grant them authority to do?
- What response does God require from those who are under this authority?

King David had more experience with authority than most people in the Bible. He knew what good came when authority was used wisely, and he knew by sad experience what happened when people abused authority—because he did so himself (2 Sam. 11–12). It should arrest our attention, then, that David’s last words, which are recorded for us in 2 Samuel 23, are about authority:

<sup>1</sup> Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,  
the oracle of the man who was raised on high,  
the anointed of the God of Jacob,  
the sweet psalmist of Israel:

<sup>2</sup> “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me;  
his word is on my tongue.

<sup>3</sup> The God of Israel has spoken;  
the Rock of Israel has said to me:

When one rules justly over men,  
ruling in the fear of God,

<sup>4</sup> he dawns on them like the morning light,  
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,  
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.” (vv. 1–4)

8. What characterizes the exercise of authority that David describes in verse 3?

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

9. *Why is it important for kings, and all those who exercise authority, to wield their authority “in the fear of God” (v. 3)? What will happen if they don’t?*

10. *According to David, what happens when a king rules justly and in the fear of God? Have you ever experienced fruit like this in your own life from the godly exercise of authority?*

11. *In light of all of these passages, how would you respond to someone who thought that authority itself is a bad thing?*

12. *List out all the authorities you are under and all the ways you exercise authority over others. What does it practically look like for you to live under authority and exercise authority in a godly way? Consider passages such as:*

- Ephesians 5:22–33
- Ephesians 6:1–4
- Ephesians 6:5–9
- 1 Peter 2:13–17
- 1 Peter 2:18–25

# TEACHER'S NOTES FOR WEEK 1

## DIGGING IN

1. In this passage, Nebuchadnezzar says that God's kingdom and dominion are everlasting and that his rule is over all the inhabitants of heaven and earth.

2. Nebuchadnezzar says that God does whatever he pleases among the inhabitants of his earth, and none can hinder his plans or question their justice. In other words, God exercises complete sovereignty and authority over human beings.

3. Answers will vary. A Christian's heart should rejoice and be humbled and offer worship when we contemplate God's unrivaled sovereignty over everything. But too often pride wells up within us and we think, "That's not fair!" But to rebel in our hearts against God's rule is the very essence of sin. So we must cultivate appropriate reverence, awe, and humility before God, rejoicing that he is the King of all and we are his subjects.

4. Man is created in God's image (v. 26).

5. That man is created in God's image means that he is to exercise dominion over the creation, righteously stewarding its resources and imaging God's rule over it (vv. 26, 28). Thus, in verse 28 God tells the first man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it.

6. From this passage we learn that God has delegated a measure of authority over creation to all human beings. Further, we learn that exercising authority over creation is part of what it means to be human. Since all of us are made in the image of God, all of us are to righteously exercise authority over creation.

7. Romans 13:1–7 speaks of the authority God grants to the government. He grants this authority for the purpose of rewarding those who do good and punishing those who do evil in order to promote the good of society (Rom. 13:4; see also 1 Pet. 2:13–17). He also grants the authority to levy taxes! Therefore, in response, we are to honor, submit to, obey, and pay taxes to our governing authorities (Rom. 13:7).

Ephesians 6:1–4 speaks to the authority God has given to parents over their children. He grants them authority to teach, train, and discipline their children so as to teach them how to live according to God's will (see also Heb. 12:5–11). Children, who are under this authority, are to respond by submitting to and obeying their parents.

## LEADING ONE ANOTHER

Hebrews 13:7, 17 speaks to the authority God has given to leaders in the church. This authority is for the purpose of teaching God's Word, leading the church, and modeling a godly way of life in order that the church would grow to maturity in Christ. In response, church members are to submit to their leaders and imitate their way of life insofar as the church's leaders follow Christ (see 1 Cor. 11:1).

8. Righteousness and the fear of God are what characterize the exercise of authority David describes in verse 3.

9. Answers will vary, but the basic idea is that in order for any person to rightly exercise authority, we must recognize that we are *under* God's authority. If we recognize that we are under God's authority we will submit to his will. We will strive to wield authority righteously and for others' good, just as God does to us. We will recognize that our will isn't absolute—only God's is. If we *don't* exercise authority in the fear of God, we will be tempted to rule over others harshly, to abuse authority for our own benefit and others' hurt, and to take advantage of those under us rather than using our authority to bless them.

10. According to David, when someone rules righteously over men, the effect is like the sun shining ever more brightly until it reaches full noon, and like rain that waters the earth. This twin imagery speaks to godly authority as something that brings life, vitality, and growth to those who are under it. Personal experiences of this will vary, but hopefully participants will be able to recall positive experiences of parents, teachers, church leaders, government leaders, and others exercising authority in a godly and righteous way.

11. In light of all these passages, an appropriate response would be something like, "Of course authority can be abused, and when it is, that's an awful thing. God clearly condemns that in his Word. But the right use of authority reflects the character of God himself. He is Lord and he rules over all the universe. And he created us in his image, to exercise authority over creation. Further, he gives specific kinds of authority to the government, to parents, to employers, and to leaders in the church. This authority is meant to bless, protect, help, and build up others, and is to be exercised in the fear of God and in submission to his will."

12. Answers will vary.

# **IX** 9Marks

## **Building Healthy Churches**

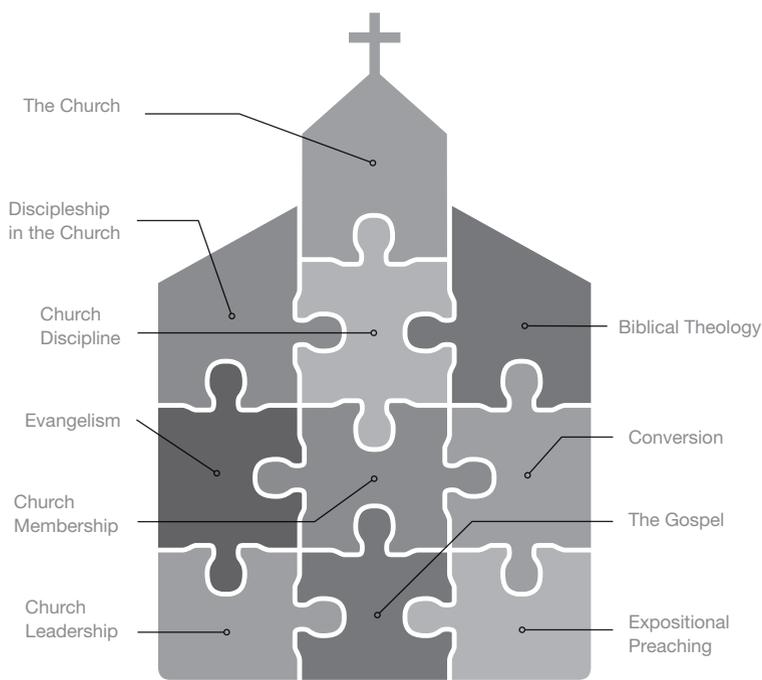
**9Marks exists to equip church leaders with a biblical vision and practical resources for displaying God's glory to the nations through healthy churches.**

**To that end, we want to see churches characterized by these nine marks of health:**

- 1    Expository Preaching**
- 2    Biblical Theology**
- 3    A Biblical Understanding of the Gospel**
- 4    A Biblical Understanding of Conversion**
- 5    A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism**
- 6    Biblical Church Membership**
- 7    Biblical Church Discipline**
- 8    Biblical Discipleship**
- 9    Biblical Church Leadership**

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