

## Purpose of Leaders- Nigeria

God gives very specific responsibilities to the elders and pastors specifically, prayer and the ministry of the Word, but God gives a greater responsibility to the church than just prayer and ministry of the Word. That's a very important role, but there's also an additional role the church is supposed to play. If we go to Matthew 28, we see what the great commission is for the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus started verse 18, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" He starts with His authority and then He tells the church what they have the responsibility to do, go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. It's very important to realize this isn't the role of the elders and pastors, this is the role of the church. Now, as members of the church pastors and elders should be doing this, but this is the role of the church, making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which doesn't mean that you have a restriction that only pastors baptize, but leading the person to repentance to where they accept Jesus Christ is not just the role of the leaders of the church, it's the role of every member of the church. Jesus goes on to say, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. Again, that's not just the role of elders and pastors, this is the responsibility of the church. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. He promises His presence with His church so that they can accomplish these things. So as I speak to you, the heads of various departments and what your responsibilities are, in the end it all comes down to the same thing, fulfilling what Jesus Christ commanded the church to do. When you think of your role as the head of the men's fellowship you need to think of that as your role is to fulfill the great commission in that aspect because as the church we have been told what our role is in the world. God also says there are many parts to the body, that some people are hands and some people are feet. There are some people whose focus should be witnessing to the nations, outreach, and calling people to repentance. There should be other people whose focus is to get people to understand what Jesus Christ commanded. Teaching isn't just through words, teaching is also through doing. So this morning I want to talk about the responsibilities of the lay leaders inside the church. This afternoon I want to talk about the responsibility to outside the church. First we need to talk about the most important thing which is where you stand before God because the most important thing if you are going to accomplish the work of the great commission is to make sure you are part of the true church. We want to think that's easy, we made a profession of faith and said we believe Jesus Christ is our Lord, but when Jesus Christ walked the earth they all said the Messiah was their Lord, they all said they were waiting for the Messiah to come and He came and they killed Him. To think that we are right with God, that because we have said certain words our hearts are right with God, but the Jews all said their hearts were right with God and God said they honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. You need to check your own hearts and make sure you are fulfilling the great commission. Philippians 2:12, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Do you work out your salvation with fear and trembling? True Christians work out their salvation with fear and trembling because true Christians fear God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. If you do not fear God you do not know God, if you do not know God it doesn't matter that you use your tongue to profess God as Lord. We all need to recognize how easy it is to lie to ourselves, to think we are fine with God, but if you do not fear Him and

do not work out your salvation with fear and trembling you should not lead other people because it's about you and not about God. It can be hard to understand where you are with God. A lot of people say peace, peace when there is no peace. They say you are fine with God, but that's what false prophets have always said. It's the consistent message for thousands of years to look at someone in their sins and trespasses and say they are fine with God. The Bible says something very different, it says without holiness no one will see God. Before you can fulfill the great commission you need to deal with sin in your own life. If you are not dealing with the sin in your own life don't try to deal with other people to do the work of Jesus Christ when you're not doing the work of Christ in your own life. Workout your salvation with fear and trembling. I want to read the parable of the sower from Matthew 13:3-9, "Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

The plant in each one of those three cases, when it sprung up whether it was on thin soil and came up, some fell among the thorns and sprang up as the same plant, some fell on good soil and it was the same plant. Anyone looking at them couldn't tell the difference between the three couldn't tell whether they were of Jesus or not. Jesus later explains that the plant that grew in the thin soil, when the sun beats down on it, it dies because that's the picture of persecution. When people say nasty things about you because of your faith, and you say you must obey God rather than man and they tell you to do as they say, if we obey man rather than God we don't have true faith because we didn't resist persecution. Or when we fall among thorns and we start out with great zeal and you see this in the church all the time, where they hear a message and come forth with tears then come to all the meetings in the church with zeal, but things start happening in their lives and they don't come as often, they stop praying as much, they stop reading God's Word and maybe they come to church when it's convenient. They're also not saved. The only ones that are saved are the ones that overcome the cares of the world, overcome the persecution and produce fruits for God. Before you lead others, make sure you know which one you are, make sure you work out your faith with fear and trembling. That's the most basic things that everyone who wants to be a leader in the church needs to do. The second thing they need to do is make sure they are applying the great commission to themselves. It says to teach the disciples in the nations all the things that God has commanded. Are you teaching yourself all the things that God has commanded? You can't teach other people to do what God has commanded unless you are doing it yourself. Don't think you should be leading the women's fellowship if you are not reading the Word of God. Don't think you should be leading the choir, to lead people to worship God if you don't care who God is and what commands He has given, if you don't care what your responsibility is because you should not think that your worship is going to be pleasing in His sight. A good check of where you are with God is what you do with His Word. If you love Christ, He is the Word of God, it expresses Him. So if you love Christ, you have to love His Word because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Where you are with Christ is demonstrated where you are with your Bible. If you never open it, you should not think you have an open relationship with Christ. Before you can help lead the church to fulfill the great commission you need to make sure you are fulfilling it for yourself, then you can lead others. Another principle that's key

for anyone who wants to do the work of fulfilling God's commandments to the church, is that they need to understand their position in the world. God has ordered the whole world for one thing, for His glory. If you're taking a position in the church, whether it's on the local church council or whatever position you hold, if you're looking for people to say well done, you're doing it for your glory and God is still a jealous God. He has destroyed nations because He is a jealous God, don't think He won't destroy you. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. John the Baptist, he said after Christ came, when his disciples come to him and say that all his followers started following Christ and stopped following him, he understood the basic principle of ministry, he said he must decrease and Christ must increase. If you do anything else, you're not ministering in Christ's name regardless of how many times you say it, you're ministering in your name, for you glory and God is a jealous God, He brings low those that rise up against Him. When God, through His church, says you have this responsibility, handle it with care for if you abuse His church He is a God that loves His wife. As you read through the Old Testament you see Him judging people over and over and over again because they did not treat God as God, because they raised themselves up and made God low. The basic responsibility of the church is to raise God up and make themselves low. The meek inherit the earth. If you are doing it out of pride, if you're doing it to raise yourself up so people look towards you, don't expect God to bless that, expect God to curse that. With that context I want to talk about what the lay leaders in the church should do in the ministry of the church. Those who are more mature in the faith, those who are more zealous for God, those who God has given gifts to, they have real responsibilities to strengthen the church rather than weaken the church. What I have seen a lot of in my life is that they weaken the church in a very specific way. Instead of strengthening families, they undermine families. When you read Scripture, who has the primary responsibility to teach the Word of God to children? Is it the Sunday school teacher or the elder and pastor? No. It's the father. In Deuteronomy 6, Deuteronomy is written when Moses is about to die and he recounts everything that has happened in his life and he comes to where God gave the ten commandments to him and he says I have been your teacher, but I am going away so then he appoints who has the responsibility to teach the Word of God generation to generation and he doesn't say the Levites are supposed to come in and teach the children, he doesn't say the civil leaders and magistrates, he is explicit, he says the father is to teach the children. Let me read Deuteronomy 6:1-2, "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." God is saying through Moses that they received the laws from Moses, but the next generation and the next generation were to receive the commands of God from the mouths of their father. If you are going to fulfill the great commission, you're not allowed to do it according to your own wisdom because then you are not fulfilling the commands of Christ. Christ is the One who gave Moses the law. When you read this, this is Christ giving this commandment. In every ministry the question has to be asked if you are strengthening the system God set up or am I undermining it? If we are to fulfill the great commission, to teach them to obey every commandment that I have given, you have to obey His commands. He didn't just set up a system that we can walk in and do whatever we want, God has set up a system that He says is the righteous way to do it. When we take this back, what does this look like in practical outworking? What should men's fellowship do? Men's fellowship, the men should be asking

one another what you are doing with your families. That should be the primary thing that men's fellowship does, at least towards its ministry towards the church. One of the things that you have organizations like that for has to be for accountability, has to be saying, 'are you doing the commands of Christ?' God has given men other men to say, 'are you doing what's God telling you to do?' When Cain killed Abel and God asked him, 'Where's your brother?' Cain's answer is, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' That is the most basic description of someone who hates his neighbor. When you think of an organization like men's fellowship, it has to be about love, it has to be about caring for one another, it has to be about being your brother's keeper. When we organize these things and organize them by men and women, there are reasons to do that. A man understands what another man is going through because God has given men different roles than women. Titus 2 says specifically why there needs to be women ministering to women, because a man has no idea how to love a husband. The way a woman loves her children is different than how a man loves his children because God gave men and women different responsibilities. So it takes a woman to teach another woman how to love her children. If you think about what these basic ministries are about, they're not about undermining the family, they are about strengthening the family. There's a very shocking verse, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, that causes great distress in churches in the U.S. "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church." This is a hated verse in America, but do you understand why God put it in the Bible? When a pastor preaches Sunday morning, there should be a time where there can be interaction and God is saying the woman should not speak because she is under the authority of her husband. The agreement of theology between the husband and wife is more important than the agreement of theology between the wife and pastor. What she has to do is ask her husband at home so the pastor isn't dividing the husband and wife. This is how serious God takes the family and how serious He takes the idea of the church dividing the family. God says that the church is not supposed to divide the family because who has the highest authority in the family for teaching the Word? Not the elder, not the pastor, the father. God gives us this picture in 1 Corinthians because it's not just towards the children, it's the picture of the gospel. Jesus Christ washes His bride in the water of the Word. When a father and husband is not teaching the Word in his home he is twisting the gospel because that is key to what the gospel is, it's that Jesus Christ is cleansing His bride and every ministry in the church should be making sure that's the same thing that happens with the families in the church. Anything that undermines that is contrary to the commands of Christ. I'm going to speak to the men, you are not a mature man of God, you may not even be a man of God if you will not read the Word to your wife and children. It is the most basic sign of hatred if you will not tell your children they are going to hell unless they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's more than that, it's the church's duty to teach them to obey all things Christ has commanded. The most basic duty of a man is to teach his wife and children what Christ has commanded. If you are failing to do that, don't say you love God because this is how you love God, to keep His commandments. No ministry in the church should undermine that. Every ministry in the church needs to be about doing things God's way because if instead of doing it God's way, we do it our way, we are increasing rather than God increasing. We are receiving the glory rather than God receiving the glory. The ministries in the church need to be about getting families to be in order. It's really easy for them to undermine the order of family's, the order that God put in place that is all wise. The women's fellowship can say, 'but our husbands don't teach us, so

let's just teach each other.' They weren't allowed to divide with the pastor because of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, but now we say the women can divide from the men, that is not God's order. Churches have to love the men in the church enough to say, if you don't care enough about your children to read the Word to them, why do you think you know and love Christ? If you won't read the Word, you don't love the Word, and you don't love Christ. It's really simple. It's crucial that the ministries of the church do things in the order that God says they are to be done. It's to put the Word of God in the proper place. Let's talk about other ministries. It's really easy for church councils to get together to exalt themselves or to get together and do things that undermine God's order instead of asking how to get the focus on the Word of God for the churches. The churches need the Word of God, that's where the healing is, that's where the hope has to be. False prophets come all the time. Nigeria is famous worldwide for its false prophets and false prophets always say the same thing, you don't need to pay attention to the Word, everything will be fine. The church needs to say the opposite in every ministry. It doesn't matter how wise we think we are, what we need is the wisdom that God has given us. God does not accept a rebellious bride, God chastens, God cleanses, God purges, God deals with the problem. Everything needs to be about submitting to God. When you think of the choir, does the choir exalt the Word of God? That should be the focus of every ministry of the church. Jesus Christ explains why He gave hymns, Psalms, and spiritual songs. He gave that to the church so they could understand and learn. Every ministry of the church is to be focus on exalting God. It's really important that that's what your ministries are about and not exalting Him the way you think He should be exalted, but exalting Him the way He says He is to be exalted in His Word. The way that God says He is to be exalted in His Word is that you obey His commandments as it says in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgement, including every secret thing including good and evil." This is the basic ministry of the church, of everything. It's to fear God and do what He says. Every ministry of the church must be about the same things because this is man's all, fear God and keep His commandments. When you are ministering with people, never do anything to diminish the fear of God. It's really easy to do it, it's really easy when someone is struggling with sin, 'but I see how faithful you are to going to church, I know you're a faithful man of God.' That is to remove fear of God which is the opposite of what God commands us to do. The message of the church, internal even, needs to be fear God. This word is not 'have reverence towards', this is fear God, be scared to death. God considers sin so serious that one person ate a fruit that they were told not to eat and because they ate that one fruit, billions and billions of people have died. Not just their offspring died, how many animals have died because one person ate a piece of fruit? We look at the world around us, we see death everywhere. All of that is because one person took a bite of fruit. That was what God's response was to one person taking a bite of fruit. This is a God that needs to be feared. Don't say, 'but we're such good people God has to be kind to us!' Have you ever said a cross word to someone? That would have caused billions of people to die. Have you ever looked on a woman and lusted after her? That would have caused billions of people to die. That's how serious God considers that. Do you say you would rather his house than your house? God says that's worthy of death. God says He is so holy, so perfect, that He cannot sit back and do nothing when somebody says they want someone else's house and not work for it, why did God give me this house? One little lie is worthy of being in hell for eternity, in utter darkness. Probably everyone in this room has burned themselves at some point in time, hell is having the pain of that burn for all eternity while you are screaming in utter

darkness with no hope of ever having contact with anyone ever again. That's how holy God is, that's what every ministry of the church needs to be pointing to, this is the God we serve. You need to teach the fear of God, you need to have the fear of God in your own heart because the fear of God is clean, it purges sin. When we see God for who He is, when we see the judgment that we are due, there's only one thing to do and that's to flee to Christ, to fall down before Him and beg for forgiveness because in Christ we have the testimony of what God thinks of sin. It is so serious and of such significance that He sent His only Son who had no sin to receive the punishment of sin. What we need to maintain and what every ministry of the church needs to maintain is a fear of God because when we stop fearing God we stop recognizing the sacrifice of Christ. It's only when we understand why we need a Savior that we will show honor to that Savior for what He did. We need to be teaching the holiness of God, we need to be leading others to understand the fear of God, we need to be telling our fathers if they don't love their children enough to tell them who God is then they should be filled with terror. Christ said if you treat the little ones that way it is better for you to have a millstone tied around your neck and be thrown in a lake. The church needs to not allow the men in the church to abuse their children. Let me talk about accountability. If we see God as holy and if we are our brother's keeper, then we are going to want to constrain our brother's sin. That starts with a basic view that we have a right to see into other people's lives. Like Paul writes to Corinth, you have seen my whole life before you, you know exactly how I live. That's because everyone could look at him and say he was a holy and righteous man. We need to live our lives openly before one another, where we show our sin, show our failing, and recognize our need for repentance. Frequently, the sub groups in a church can be a good way to have that accountability, it can't just be the responsibility of the pastors and elders. The elders need to be their brother's keeper, but every Christian needs to be their brother's keeper. There are two aspects of that, one is being willing to confront others in their sin because of fear of God and seeing the holiness of God we recognize the seriousness of sin so we love our brother and sister enough to say something. Now, we do it after we have dealt with that same sin in our own life, but we deal with our sin. It's the most basic way we love our neighbor. There is another related way we love our neighbor, we don't put temptation in front of them to sin, what we do is we put constraints in place so it's harder for them to sin. When we count the offering you have multiple people, but there are other ways we can tempt others to sin. Especially for women and the way they dress. A woman has a responsibility to not dress in a way to tempt a man. It is important for us to recognize we have a duty, the man has a duty not to look at the woman, but the woman has a duty to make it easier for a man to do that. It can work similar ways with men, the sin may not be the same, but we know like the qualifications of an elder it says let them not be a novice, young in the faith, because if they are people will tell them, 'what a great sermon!' and they will be puffed up with pride and they will be destroyed. This goes a lot broader than an elder. Be careful that you don't flatter people and puff them up because that can destroy them. Pride is the most basic sin. Why did Eve eat that fruit? She ate that fruit because she said, 'God gets to decide what's good and evil?' and Satan said, 'why can't you decide?' And out of pride she ate the fruit. Pride is the root of all other sins. Part of our responsibility of how to love one another in the church, which as the heads of the ministries of the church this has to be a key thing you do, is work to constrain sin, not work to increase it. This is how the church becomes a witness to the world, it starts by being a holy and separate people. The way you are a holy and separate people is obeying God's commandments both individually, but every ministry of the church needs to be about obeying the commands of God because that's what the duty He has given to

the church in the world is and it starts in the church. Before we can evangelize the world, we need to deal with ourselves.

Oh Lord God, we do pray that You guide us to the ways these ministries can be a blessing. It's easy for certain ministries, like the choir, instead of creating humility creates pride. Lord, I pray that You work to give wisdom to the people here, the men and women, so they cause and help their churches to obey the commands of God. I specifically pray that if there is anyone here who doesn't fear God, who hasn't seen the seriousness of their sin, that you open their eyes and let them flee to Christ. We pray in Your precious Son's name, for there is no other name in heaven whereby we can be saved, we pray in Your great name, amen.