

## What's The Deal At Stone Creek Church Part 10

Servant Leadership

*Acts 20:28*

*Memory Verses: Matthew 20:26b*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Okay, we've been in this series long enough now, you should be able to answer this question no problem. What's the deal at Stone Creek Church? **Depending on Christ we will reach our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed.** We depend on Christ through... a reliance upon the word, consistent prayer and authentic worship. We will reach our world through... relational outreach and strategic missions. And we hope to see lives completely transformed through... intentional discipleship. Right? Of course! The only one of our core values that we have yet to look at in detail would be the last one; intentional discipleship, and of course we will be getting there within the next few weeks, but we've also looked at how these core values function within our church and in the community.

We've looked at how authentic worship and looks when we partake of the holy ordinances of baptism and communion. We've seen how authentic worship. We've also seen how authentic worship combined with intentional discipleship creates a culture of family-like fellowship. And then last week Don showed us how gracious giving incorporates each and everyone of our core values! We give from a heart of obedience to God's word, from an authentic heart of worship, and with much prayer. We give for reaching our world relationally and strategically. And we give to help our church do the work of discipleship. Every penny that we give to the local church here at Stone Creek goes to accomplish our vision and to support our core values!

This morning we want to switch gears a little bit. The topic this morning will also incorporate our vision and our values but as where every message so far is a challenge mainly to you, the church body, today's message is a challenge to me and the leadership of our church. In a way, what we've heard so far through the course of this series is what Stone Creek expects of you. This morning you will hear what you should expect from Stone Creek. What's the deal here at Stone Creek? My desperate prayer is that what you would find here is servant leadership! Look with me if you would at our verse for this morning. Let's read **Acts 20:28**.

Paul makes it clear to leaders of the church, that we must take extra care of our own spiritual health so that we can care for your spiritual health. This isn't our church, we are stewards of it. It is God's church,

bought by his own blood. Therefore we must be extra careful.

No doubt, you've either been in churches or you have heard of churches where the leaders of the church acted as if they had never heard this verse before. They didn't take care of their own spiritual health, which resulted in the spiritual and emotional abuse of their church members, and instead of caring for the most precious gift purchased by God's blood, they used it for their own gratification, popularity, and wealth!

My kid's classmates know that they are pastor's kids and they will often hear comments like, and I quote, "my dad says I can't go to church with you because all pastors molest children." And, "my dad says that churches are only about getting your money so the pastor can get rich." Listen, I know where these sentiments come from. The Church in America has shot itself in the foot. Multiple times a year we hear stories about these things and worse, where high profile pastors have to resign or get fired because they have neglected to take care of themselves and their faith family. We have a serious leadership problem in the American Church and the secular world knows it!

The Bible is very clear about what it means to be a leader according to **Matthew 20:26-27**. So, this morning we want you to know that we are aware of these concerns and we want to commit to you, covenant with you, that you don't have to worry about that stuff here. Yes, we are men, we are fallible, and we will make mistakes, but as far as we can, we will do everything in our power, in accountability to one another, to care for ourselves spiritually and to care for you sacrificially! John Stott put it well when he said, "the authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve." The point is clear this morning. **Being a Leader In The Local Church Takes An Inward Spiritual Care for Godliness & An Outward Sacrificial Care for God's People.**

#### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing I want us to see here is that... **Servant Leadership Takes An Inward Spiritual Care For Godliness.** So, let's look again at **Acts 20:28a**. The very first thing Paul tells church leaders to do is to pay careful attention to yourselves. Meaning, a church leader cannot lead others until they can lead themselves. Of course, all believers are called to have a personal relationship with God and practice spiritual disciplines, but there is an even greater emphasis for church leaders to do so.

Why? Because Satan is strategic. He knows that in a war you target the leaders. He knows that you bomb the white house before you bomb any other house. He knows that in battle most casualties are on the front lines. And, if he can't stop God he will do everything in his power to wreck our testimonies. This is why we are called in **Ephesians 4:27** to not give a

foothold to the devil! If you give him an inch he will take a mile, he will take it all!

Why should church leaders learn to care for their own spiritual godliness? Because **1Ti 3:6** makes it clear that a chief concern for us is that we would become puffed up with pride and fall. I was just telling Don this story the other day. When I was 16 years old, I was considered a leader in my youth group. I had already preached a couple times, I had testified to some big spiritual callings on my life, and I had gone on a couple mission trips. People were very public in affirming my spiritual maturity which in return meant that I could take my focus off of my own spiritual care. The title, and the prestige, was like a bullet proof vest. I felt like nothing could test me. I was resting on my laurels. I had achieved outward recognition, and now I felt that inward righteousness was not important. Because of that I fell into a lot of sin and for about four years I totally took my eye off of my own spiritual growth. Thank God, He called me back to himself and my Sophomore year of college everything changed.

But we see this in much bigger names than 16 year old Shevi Sloane. Think of some of the greatest evangelical juggernauts of the past twenty years. Men like Mark Drischoll, James MacDonald, Perry Noble, Bob Coy, and Tullian Tchividian (the grandson of Billy Graham), many of whose books are on my shelf, all became puffed up with pride, put their own spiritual care on hold, and fell big time; forced to resign because of spiritual abuse, sexual abuse, or alcohol abuse. What a shame. It is extremely important that church leaders keep their eyes focused on their own spiritual health or they will fall and probably take down their churches with them! We've seen it a hundred times!

So, how do church leaders stay righteous and disciplined? They should have a commitment to a couple of things. First, they should have a dedication to the Word. **2 Ti 3:16-17** tells us that the Bible has everything needed to equip a man for godliness. Second, they should have a devotion to Prayer. **Mt 26:41** tells us that prayer keeps us from the temptations of the world. Third, they should have a discerning Counsel. **Pr 11:14** tells us that where there is no guidance people fall but in the abundance of counselors there is safety! I keep a specific and wide variety of counselors. I have spiritual counselors called deacons / elders. These men speak into my life every single day. I have financial, mechanical counselors on our boards. Thank God for people like Rhonda, Hillary, and Chris and others who know a whole lot more about finances, technology, and construction than I do. Believe it or not, it takes more than spiritual wisdom to lead a church. And besides these groups of people I take counsel from all of our covenant partners. There is wisdom in taking counsel. There is accountability in having a counsel. Fourth, they should feel a duty to be an Example. **He 13:7** reminds us

that the church is considering my way of life and are imitating my faith. That is a huge responsibility. One of the first pastors I ever worked for told me something that has stayed with me for 20 years now. He said, "the life of a Christian leader is a **glass house**. No matter what you do, people will throw rocks at it, so don't pile them in your front yard, make them go find their own rocks!" Every time I sin, every mistake I make, could be used to create division. I can't allow that. Another quote says, "people who live in glass houses, have to wash the windows all the time." I think it was meant as a joke, but it is true none the less. If people are watching me as a leader, then I have a responsibility to live in a way that honors Christ and is worth imitating. And fifth, they should have a desire to be Qualified. **1Ti 3:1-13** gives about 20-25 qualifications which church leaders must abide by. Church leaders are held to a higher standard and must display it through their lifestyle. This doesn't mean that they have never struggled with these issues, but it means that right now, they have to take extra care to resist these things. It means that every leader must be vetted. If you are a leader in the church then it should be extremely hard to hide who you really are.

The bottom line is clear, church leaders are first called to take care of their own spiritual health as they strive for godliness. **Only after a leader has proven to himself a care for spiritual godliness can they then trust themselves with the care of the flock.** **Being a Leader In The Local Church Takes An Inward Spiritual Care for Godliness & An Outward Sacrificial Care for God's People.**

The next thing we need to see today is that... **Servant Leadership Takes An Outward Sacrificial Care For God's People.** Look again at **Acts 20:28b,d** where it says to pay careful attention to all the flock, and to care for the church of God. Once we have taken care of ourselves we then are called to take care of the church. And, we do so through three main ways.

First, we care for God's People by shepherding them. Look at **1 Pe 5:2-3**. To shepherd means to spiritually lead; disciple, teach, train, mentor, and counsel. The thing to note here is that there's a huge difference between leading by example as a servant and bossing people around. Shepherds aren't domineering or harsh or cruel or heavy handed, they are humble and meek. My desire is that every leader here would be a spiritual shepherd to everyone here. We don't want to make demands, we want to share God's will and try lead in that direction. That's why we lead with the Word as our standard. It's never thus saith the pastor or the board, or the church – it's thus saith the Lord!

Second, we care for God's People by serving them. Look again at **Mt 20:26**. Whoever leads the church must be a servant of the people. We all know that there are churches where the leaders sit back and watch the church do all the work. It's not right, and it's not biblical. That's why at Stone Creek Church I can say, good luck trying to outwork the leaders in this

church. Our deacons, our trustees, these people serve hard. In fact, I think that **one of the greatest strengths of Stone Creek is how much we serve one another.** When someone in the church's car breaks down we have leaders who are on it. When someone needs groceries or to pay the light bill, we have leaders who are on it. When this property needs to be maintained, we have leaders on it. I mean that's kind of an understatement... for a good deal of this building our guys built it! And for that, I say, thank you! Thank you for setting the example of what a leader is by serving this church!

Third, we care for God's people by equipping. Look at – **Ep 4:11-13.** Our roles can get confusing in the church. For many years it has been assumed that those who are hired to lead the church are those who do the work of ministry. And that part would be true, I am called to disciple and preach and do that stuff, but mostly as leaders we are called to equip you to do that stuff. Look at this verse, as leaders we are to build up the body, for the work of the ministry, to maturity! **We are to do the work of discipleship so that we can equip you to read the word, equip you to pray, equip you to live authentic lives of worship, equip you to evangelize, equip you to have a global focus, and to equip you to disciple others.**

We care for the church by shepherding, serving, and equipping, and we do all of that sacrificially. Look at **Mk 10:45.** You see Jesus is our example. He didn't come to be served but to serve, and we want to serve like Christ. Jesus is the perfect example of a servant leader. He washed his disciples feet. Everywhere he went He helped, healed, and comforted those in his path. Eventually, when he could give no more, He gave his own life for all of mankind. This is what it means to be a servant leader; to be a sacrifice. Listen, the leaders of this church are committed to serving you in the same manner, by putting your needs before ours, by laying our lives down for yours. Over the years when I show up at night, or meet someone on a Saturday they say, "I don't want to put you out pastor." Know this, it doesn't matter what day, what time, dead of the night, whatever, you aren't putting me or any of our leaders out... we live for this! **Being a Leader In The Local Church Takes An Inward Spiritual Care for Godliness & An Outward Sacrificial Care for God's People.**

The last thing we need to see this morning is that... **Servant Leadership Takes An Upward Subservient Care For God's Glory.** One more look at **Acts 20:28c, e.** It says, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, which he obtained with his own blood. Listen, hopefully you know that we aren't just serving you, but ultimately we are serving God. **Col 3:23-24** reminds us to work heartily as for the Lord. We serve you because we love you and want to care for you, but more than

that we want to serve and love our God. And hopefully you are okay with that. But, there also comes a huge responsibility to that. This verse reminds us that we must give an account to God for how we lead the church he died and bled for! Look at **He 13:17**, and **James 3:1.** If you want to be a leader you need to know that God takes that serious! **If Jesus shed his blood for his church then he is going to expect a lot from those who are stewards of his church.** We also need to recognize a few things here. This is not our church and we are not in charge. This is God's church and He is in charge. We are merely under-shepherds.

So why do we do it? Look at **1 Pe 4:11.** Whoever serves, serves, that in everything God may be glorified in Jesus Christ. We don't serve the church for our glory... we serve the church for God's glory! **Being a Leader In The Local Church Takes An Inward Spiritual Care for Godliness & An Outward Sacrificial Care for God's People.**

### Application

So as we close today, let's make it clear. As leaders of this church we make this commitment to you. We will focus on our own inward spiritual care as we strive for godliness. We will prioritize an outward sacrificial care for you as we strive for your spiritual maturity and overall wellbeing. And, above all, we will have an upward subservient care for God's glory knowing that we will have to give an account on how we have shepherded, served, and equipped you!

### Conclusion

So as way of a reflection on what we've heard today I want us to do two things. First, I want you to find one of our deacon elders and raise a hand towards them and I want you to pray this prayer of them. I will pray it and I want you to repeat it out loud.

Secondly, I want our leaders to pray for you. So i'm going to have our deacons stand where they are and pray over you. They are going to pray out loud as well and at the same time. I know that's a little different, but hey, this is Stone Creek, we like to keep you on your toes. After they are finished praying, you will be dismissed.