Lake Lynn
BAPTIST CHURCH



A Wednesday Night Study in Biblical Church Leadership

God-Owned • Elder-Led • Deacon-Served • Congregation-Ruled

Catch-Up Edition

Everything taught in the five-session series, combined from the leader guide and participant guide for anyone who missed a Wednesday night.

Lake Lynn Baptist Church | Fayetteville, North Carolina | lakelynn.org

About This Booklet

This booklet is for anyone who missed our Wednesday night series, "Whose Church Is It Anyway?" It brings the leader guide's teaching and the participant guide's key points and questions together in one place, so you can read it on your own and get everything the series covered.

The series asks one controlling question: Whose church is it? Over five sessions we walked through the Bible's answer: the church is God-owned, elder-led, deacon-served, and congregation-ruled.

How to Use It

- Read one session at a time, and look up the Scripture passages as you go.
- Use the "Think and Talk About" questions for personal reflection or family discussion.
- Close each session with the short prayer, then come talk with Pastor Phil about any questions.

A note about where we are: the leadership model taught in this series is a proposal our church family is studying together. It is under discussion, not adopted policy.

Introduction: Course Correction

The question: *Who gets to decide how the church should work?*

Key texts: 2 Timothy 3:16–17 • Acts 17:10–12 • Mark 7:8–9

Big idea: A faithful church does not change merely because something is old, and it does not keep something merely because it is familiar. Scripture must continually correct our course.

The Teaching

Lake Lynn has been loved and served by faithful people for generations. This study is not an accusation that everything before us was wrong. Every church inherits habits, structures, and traditions. The question is whether we are willing to hold those practices up to Scripture and adjust wherever Scripture gives us a clearer pattern.

In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, Paul says all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training. Scripture does not merely give us new information; it corrects us. A church that says it believes the Bible must allow the Bible to correct its practices.

In Acts 17:10–12, the Bereans were called noble because they received teaching eagerly while examining the Scriptures daily to see whether it was true. The right response to a study like this is neither automatic resistance nor automatic acceptance. It is: "Show me from Scripture."

In Mark 7:8–9, Jesus warns that human tradition becomes a problem when it displaces God's commands. Tradition itself is not the enemy. It becomes dangerous when "we have always done it this way" carries more authority than the Word.

- **Honor the past without being ruled by it.** We can be grateful for faithful pastors, deacons, teachers, and members who came before us while recognizing that no generation gets everything exactly right.

- **Let Scripture set the course.** Our constitution, bylaws, denominational customs, experiences, and preferences are secondary authorities. Scripture is the final authority.
- **Course correction is an act of faithfulness.** It does not mean the whole journey was wrong. It means we have checked our direction against the map and adjusted where necessary.

> **The bottom line:** *We are not trying to invent a new Lake Lynn. We are asking Scripture to help us make a faithful course correction.*

Remember this: **If Scripture shows us a clearer way, faithfulness means we adjust our course.**

Think and Talk About

- What is the difference between honoring tradition and being controlled by it?
- What fears can make a church resistant to examining its structure biblically?

Close in Prayer

Jesus, if You show us a clearer way through Your Word, give us the faith and humility to follow You.

Week 1: God-Owned

The question: *Whose church is it anyway?*

> **Key texts:** Matthew 16:13–18 • Acts 20:28 • Colossians 1:15–20 • Ephesians 1:22–23

Big idea: The church belongs to Jesus. He builds it, purchased it with His blood, and is its Head. Everyone else is a steward.

The Teaching

Most church conflicts eventually reveal an ownership question: Who gets to decide? The pastor? The deacons? The people who have been here longest? The majority? The first answer must be none of the above. Jesus calls it "my church." Before we discuss elders, deacons, or congregational authority, we establish that every human role operates under Christ's ownership.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I will build my church." The church is His possession and His project. Human leaders do not build personal kingdoms; they participate in what Christ is building. In Acts 20:28, Paul tells the Ephesian elders to care for "the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." The price of the church establishes the seriousness of stewardship.

Colossians 1:15–20 says Christ is the head of the body, the church, and is preeminent in everything. Church structure cannot be mainly about distributing human power; it must express Christ's headship. Ephesians 1:22–23 says God placed all things under Christ's feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church. The ultimate authority structure is not congregation over pastor or pastor over congregation. It is Christ over His church.

- **Jesus owns the church.** Lake Lynn is not the pastor's church, the deacons' church, the founding families' church, or even the congregation's church in an ownership sense.

- **Every person is a steward.** Stewardship means real responsibility without ultimate ownership. Elders, deacons, and members are entrusted with different responsibilities for the same church.
- **Christ rules through His Word.** Saying "Jesus is in charge" cannot mean following private impressions. We know the will of the Head through the Scriptures He has given His church.
- **Ownership changes the tone of leadership.** The question stops being "How do I get my way?" and becomes "What would faithfulness to Jesus require of us?"

> **The bottom line:** *Nobody at Lake Lynn owns Lake Lynn. Jesus does. Every one of us is a steward.*

Remember this: **Nobody at Lake Lynn owns Lake Lynn. Jesus does.**

Think and Talk About

- How does saying "our church" sometimes subtly become an ownership claim?
- What changes when we begin with Christ's ownership instead of human authority?

Close in Prayer

Jesus, Lake Lynn belongs to You. Teach us to faithfully care for what You have entrusted to us.

Week 2: Elder-Led

The question: *Whom has Jesus entrusted to shepherd and lead His church?*

> **Key texts:** Acts 20:17, 28–31 • 1 Peter 5:1–5 • 1 Timothy 3:1–7 • Titus 1:5–9 • Hebrews 13:7, 17

Big idea: Jesus entrusts qualified elders with responsibility to shepherd, teach, protect, equip, care for, and lead His church under His authority.

The Teaching

The word "elder" can sound unfamiliar in a Baptist church even though the office is thoroughly New Testament. This session is not about creating a higher class of Christian. It is about asking what Scripture calls the men charged with pastoral oversight and what Jesus expects from them.

In Acts 20:17, 28, Paul summons the elders of the Ephesian church, then tells those same men that the Holy Spirit made them overseers to shepherd the church. This is an important reason many Baptists understand elder, overseer, and pastor/shepherd as descriptions of the same pastoral office.

In 1 Peter 5:1–5, Peter commands elders to shepherd God's flock, exercising oversight - not under compulsion, not for shameful gain, and not domineering over those entrusted to them. Their authority is servant-shaped and exemplary. In 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, the qualification lists emphasize character: above reproach, faithful in marriage, self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, not violent or greedy, managing the household well, mature, and holding firmly to sound doctrine. Ability matters, but character dominates the lists.

Hebrews 13:7, 17 tells members to remember and obey their leaders because those leaders keep watch over souls. But the same verse says leaders will give an account. Biblical submission and biblical accountability belong together.

- **Elders are shepherds, not executives.** The New Testament picture is relational care: knowing, feeding, protecting, correcting, and guiding people.
- **Elders lead with the Word.** The ability to teach distinguishes elder qualifications. Elders help the church understand sound doctrine and recognize error.
- **Elders lead by example, not domination.** First Peter 5 explicitly rejects domineering leadership. Authority in Christ's church should look like Christ.
- **Elders share responsibility.** The New Testament regularly speaks of elders in the plural in local churches. A plurality provides shared wisdom, mutual accountability, and pastoral care beyond one man's capacity.
- **Elders answer to Jesus.** Hebrews 13:17 should make an elder tremble before it makes him feel powerful. He watches over souls that belong to Christ and will answer for that stewardship.

> **The bottom line:** *Elder-led does not mean elder-owned. Elders are under-shepherds who lead people belonging to the Chief Shepherd.*

Remember this: **Elder-led does not mean elder-owned. Elders are under-shepherds accountable to the Chief Shepherd.**

Think and Talk About

- What is the difference between biblical authority and control?
- Why do the qualification lists emphasize character so heavily?
- How should Hebrews 13:17 shape both leaders and members?

Close in Prayer

Chief Shepherd, give Lake Lynn shepherds who love Your sheep, love Your Word, and know they will answer to You.

Week 3: Deacon-Served

The question: *How does Jesus define greatness and service in His church?*

> **Key texts:** Mark 10:42–45 • 1 Timothy 3:8–13 • Acts 6:1–7 • Philippians 2:3–8

Big idea: Deacons are qualified servants who help meet real ministry needs and strengthen the unity and mission of the church.

The Teaching

In many Baptist churches, deacons gradually became a governing board. That history often came from sincere people trying to protect and serve the church. The New Testament emphasis, however, is captured in the very word deacon: servant. Recovering that emphasis is not lowering the office. Jesus made service the definition of kingdom greatness.

In Mark 10:42–45, Jesus contrasts rulers who "lord it over" others with His disciples. Greatness among them is expressed by becoming a servant, and Jesus Himself is the model: He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom. In 1 Timothy 3:8–13, deacons, like elders, are evaluated primarily by character: dignified, truthful, sober, not greedy, holding the faith with a clear conscience, tested, and managing home life faithfully.

In Acts 6:1–7, a practical ministry crisis threatened unity between Hebrew and Hellenistic widows. Seven qualified men were selected to address the need so the apostles could remain focused on prayer and the ministry of the Word. The passage never explicitly calls these seven "deacons," so we use it as a strong model of organized service rather than claiming it settles the question. Philippians 2:3–8 shows the mind of Christ, marked by humility and looking to the interests of others. Deacon ministry should make that posture visible in the life of the church.

- **Deacon ministry begins with Jesus' definition of greatness.** Service is not beneath leadership. Service is the shape Christian leadership takes.

- **Deacons are spiritually qualified servants.** The church should not choose deacons merely because they are available, popular, successful in business, or long-time members.
- **Deacons respond to real needs.** The Acts 6 pattern shows qualified servants addressing practical needs that could distract from ministry and damage unity.
- **Deacons protect unity through service.** They are often closest to needs, hurts, logistics, and care. Their ministry can prevent practical problems from becoming relational divisions.
- **Deacons support rather than duplicate pastoral oversight.** Elders and deacons are not competing boards. Their roles complement one another under Christ.

> **The bottom line:** *Deacon-served is not a demotion. It restores the office to the Christlike dignity of service.*

Remember this: **Deacon-served is not a demotion. It recovers the dignity of Christlike service.**

Think and Talk About

- Why might service be mistaken for lesser leadership?
- What kinds of needs should deacons help the church address?
- How can deacons protect unity without becoming a governing board?

Close in Prayer

Jesus, You took the form of a servant. Make us a church that looks like You because we serve one another.

Week 4: Congregation-Ruled

The question: *What responsibility does Jesus give the gathered church?*

> **Key texts:** Matthew 18:15–20 • 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 • Acts 6:3–5 • Galatians 1:6–9 • 2 Corinthians 2:6–8

Big idea: The congregation is not an audience. Under Christ and His Word, the gathered church bears real responsibility for the church's membership, doctrine, discipline, leadership, mission, and ministry.

The Teaching

If elders lead and deacons serve, someone may ask whether the congregation still matters. The New Testament answer is emphatically yes. Elder leadership does not turn members into spectators. The gathered church repeatedly carries responsibilities that cannot simply be outsourced to a pastor or board.

In Matthew 18:15–20, Jesus' process for discipline ultimately brings an unresolved matter "to the church." The gathered church clearly has a meaningful role in guarding its membership. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul does not tell a pastor or small board privately to remove the unrepentant man. He addresses the congregation and expects corporate action when they are assembled.

In Acts 6:3–5, the whole gathering participates in selecting the seven qualified men. In Galatians 1:6–9, Paul addresses the churches themselves and holds them responsible for rejecting a distorted gospel. Guarding doctrine is not solely the responsibility of professional leaders. And in 2 Corinthians 2:6–8, Paul refers to punishment "by the majority" and then urges restoration and reaffirmed love, showing corporate responsibility in both discipline and restoration.

- **Congregation-ruled does not mean congregation-owned.** Christ remains the Owner and Head. Congregational authority is delegated and bounded by Scripture.

- **Members are responsible, not merely represented.** Membership carries obligations: guarding the gospel, affirming leaders, practicing discipline, pursuing mission, serving, giving, praying, and caring for one another.
- **Congregational rule is not micromanagement.** The New Testament does not require a church vote on every purchase, calendar item, or ministry decision. Elders should actually lead and deacons should actually serve.
- **Major matters belong to the gathered church.** A Baptist application commonly includes receiving and removing members, affirming qualified leaders, guarding doctrine, and significant matters affecting the identity and direction of the church.
- **Healthy polity requires all the pieces.** Congregationalism without leadership can become political. Elder leadership without congregational responsibility can become authoritarian. Deacon service without clarity can drift into governance. Each role works under Christ and alongside the others.

> **The bottom line:** *God-owned. Elder-led. Deacon-served. Congregation-ruled. Every part is accountable to Jesus Christ through His Word.*

Remember this: **God-owned. Elder-led. Deacon-served. Congregation-ruled. Every part remains under Jesus Christ and His Word.**

Think and Talk About

- Where does the New Testament show the gathered church acting corporately?
- What decisions belong to day-to-day leadership, and what matters require congregational responsibility?
- How can a congregation exercise authority without becoming consumer-driven or political?

Close in Prayer

Jesus, make us more than people who attend Lake Lynn. Make us a church family that faithfully takes responsibility for one another and for the mission You have given us.

Putting the Whole Model Together

The four phrases are not four competing centers of power. They describe different responsibilities under one Lord.

GOD-OWNED	Final authority and ownership - Jesus Christ, revealed through His Word
ELDER-LED	Shepherding and oversight - Teach • Lead • Protect • Equip • Care
DEACON-SERVED	Organized Christlike service - Meet needs • Support ministry • Strengthen unity
CONGREGATION-RULED	Corporate responsibility - Affirm • Guard • Discipline • Participate • Send

A Helpful Way to Say It

> *"Nobody at Lake Lynn is being given ownership of the church. Jesus already owns His church. We are trying to clarify the responsibilities He gives us: elders who faithfully lead, deacons who faithfully serve, and members who faithfully take responsibility together."*

Questions the Church Family Will Keep Working Through

- How many elders should Lake Lynn initially recognize, and how will qualified men be identified and examined?
- Will all pastors be elders, and will every elder be vocational staff?
- What responsibilities will elders be authorized to handle without a congregational vote, and what matters will the bylaws reserve for congregational affirmation?
- How will current deacon responsibilities transition without losing needed ministry coverage?
- What training and examination process will be required for elders and deacons?
- How will removal, discipline, restoration, terms, and accountability be handled?
- How much time should separate teaching the model from voting on constitutional or bylaw changes?

Our Prayer Each Week

> *Jesus, this is Your church. Lead us through Your Word. Give us faithful elders, servant-hearted deacons, and responsible members. Help us lay down our preferences, love one another well, and become the church You want Lake Lynn to be. Amen.*

The leadership model taught in this series is a proposal under discussion by our church family. It is not adopted policy. Questions? Talk with Pastor Phil.