

# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Godly, Courageous Leadership: The Need of the Hour

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No organization will be healthier than its leadership. That is true in business, politics, sports, and education. It is also true in churches, Christian networks, and denominations. As a pastor that is a sobering reality that constantly challenges me never to lose sight of the Apostle Paul's admonition in [1 Timothy 4:16](#) to keep a close watch on myself and on my doctrine. The reason that Scripture places far more emphasis on a pastor's character than his gifts or proficiencies is because what a pastor is required to be is more important than what he is called to do.

When a pastor forgets this, he can easily drift into professionalism, relying more on mental muscle-memory than the Holy Spirit to carry out his responsibilities. That quickly devolves into trusting in gifts rather than grace and can result in a pastor operating on autopilot rather than walking and leading by faith. It is spiritually deadly—both for the man and the church he serves.

Good, courageous leaders—including church leaders—serve as stack-poles for those who follow them. They will stand if they have someone to lean on. Absent such leadership, good causes will go unsupported and bad causes will go unresisted. Good people often

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remain timid and uncertain when their leaders remain mute in the face of such causes—both good and bad.

This has been demonstrated time and again the last few years in the American evangelical world and especially in the Southern Baptist Convention. Key Christian leaders have refused boldly to support the good cause of seeking equal protection under the law for unborn babies. Some have even [boldly opposed](#) it. Too many influential Christian leaders have also [failed to oppose](#) the infiltration of [godlessness](#) and godless ideologies, including critical theory and feminism, into their churches, [seminaries](#), and organizations. As a result, many Christian churches, organizations, and institutions are floundering, and many sincere Christians confused and suffering.

The need for godly, courageous leadership in our churches has never been greater. That's why I deeply appreciate the insights of Alistair Begg on this subject. My wife and I are reading through volume 2 of his daily devotional book, *Truth for Life, 365 Daily Devotions*. The following is taken from his March 15 entry. May the Lord give more godly, courageous shepherds to His people in these needy days.

In the middle of the 20th century, the Church of England commissioned a report entitled *Towards the Conversion of England*. The goal was to discover what was taking place within the parishes of the Anglican Communion. In that report, the writers came very quickly to the topic of leadership, on which they observed, “A spiritual leader can often make an astonishing difference.”<sup>1</sup> The adjective “spiritual” is crucial. If the church is going to flourish in the world, it must have spiritual men in the position of leadership. Although we are distanced from that report by many years, and although a lot has changed since then, the strategic necessity for spiritually mature leaders, in whatever country or denomination we are in, has not changed. No church of Jesus Christ progresses beyond the spiritual progress of its leaders.

Every sports team has a captain or equivalent. Each member of the team may be equally valuable, but someone has to lead. Without a captain, a team loses direction and will often lack the discipline needed to win. The same is true in an orchestra: without a conductor, it risks losing coordination and any meaningful sense of harmony.

The necessary role of leadership is true in every area of life—and it's no different with God's people. Jesus was the leader of a group of twelve disciples. When He ascended to heaven, Peter and James appear to have become the leaders of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Towards the Conversion of England* (J.M. Dent, 1946), p. 3.

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apostles and the church in Jerusalem. The apostles then established leadership in the local churches. When Paul wrote to Titus, he was very concerned that the right kinds of men were appointed to positions of leadership within the church ([Titus 1:5-9](#)). If an error was made in who was appointed, then the resulting damage would not be easily undone. And when he had limited time near Ephesus, it was “the elders of the church” who Paul summoned to Miletus in order to encourage and exhort.

Without good leadership, chaos easily follows. Many of the unsolved problems in the life of local churches can be traced back to defective leadership. Conversely, the resolution of problems almost always can be traced back to effective leadership.

If success depends upon the quality of leadership, then Christians should care deeply about leaders within their local church. Christ purchased the church with His own blood, and it is through the church that God intends to display His glory in the world and to the spiritual realms ([Ephesians 3:10](#)). Take time, then, to pray for your leaders. Consider how you can actively encourage them to faithfulness and in their labors. Be someone whom to lead is an occasion for joy and not groaning ([Hebrews 13:17](#))—for your leaders’ sake, and for yours.

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Tom Ascol has served as a Pastor of [Grace Baptist Church](#) in Cape Coral, FL since 1986. Prior to moving to Florida he served as pastor and associate pastor of churches in Texas. He has a BS degree in sociology from Texas A&M University (1979) and has also earned the MDiv and PhD degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. He has served as an adjunct professor of theology for various colleges and seminaries, including Reformed Theological Seminary, the Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary, African Christian University, Copperbelt Ministerial College, and Reformed Baptist Seminary. He has also served as Visiting Professor at the Nicole Institute for Baptist Studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. Tom serves as the President of [Founders Ministries](#) and [The Institute of Public Theology](#). He has edited the [Founders Journal](#), a quarterly theological publication of Founders Ministries, and has written hundreds of articles for various journals and magazines. He has been a regular contributor to *TableTalk*, the monthly magazine of Ligonier Ministries. He has also edited and contributed to several books, including [Dear Timothy: Letters on Pastoral Ministry](#), [The Truth and Grace Memory Books](#) for children and [Recovering the Gospel and Reformation of Churches](#). He is also the author of [From the Protestant Reformation to the Southern Baptist Convention](#), [Traditional Theology and the SBC](#) and [Strong and Courageous](#). Tom regularly preaches and lectures at various conferences throughout the United States and other countries. In addition he regularly contributes articles to the [Founders website](#) and hosts a weekly podcast called [The Sword & The Trowel](#). He and his wife Donna have six children along with four sons-in-law and a daughter-in-law. They have sixteen grandchildren.

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