

On Messianic Eldership

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The boards of elders of Beth Tikkun are gathered here around the table this evening as we begin a meeting. In 17 months, I'll be retiring and will be passing the burden of leadership and eldership to these men who I trust and love, these brothers. But I want to share with them things I wish I had known 25 years ago, and even before that when I was an elder in a church, and an elder in a church before that, and just kind of stumbled and slouched my way to the point where I am now. And so I want to pass on lessons I've learned from failures and successes and from studying the Word, to equip this group of guys, especially this younger generation, who I trust and pray will be here long after us older guys are gone, and that Beth Tikkun has a long and fruitful future. And so, I just want to pass on some lessons.

So, I wrote down a few remarks, and I'm recording this for two reasons: 1) so that if the enemy comes along later and says, "Well, Grant said..." well you can go back and listen to the teaching and see if I actually said that, or *failed* to say; you can see if I failed to say something, 2) also, there are other congregations who listen, and they're wanting instruction on how to run their home groups, their fellowships, or whatever it may be. So, this will be posted on our website so that other people can listen to it and *anybody* can listen to it. I have nothing to hide in the next 30 minutes.

So, eldership...I don't have glasses, so I'll have to make this up as I go. In the physical world, sheep and shepherds are different species. Right? That's not difficult. And in the spiritual world, sheep and shepherds are different spiritual species. Shepherds know how the sheep think. But a shepherd cannot think like a sheep. Shepherds know how sheep behave. But shepherds cannot afford to behave like sheep.

And as I use these terms "shepherd" and "sheep," I'm using the analogy that we find in the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. And it's just simply two different groups of people who are deeply connected, shepherds and sheep. Sheep will not survive without shepherds. But if shepherds do their job right, the sheep will thrive: healthy shepherds, healthy flock. But we have to remember that this flock is not ours. It's the King's flock. We are shepherds of the King's flock.

So, how do we make this transition to begin to think like shepherds? You know, shepherds know their sheep better than the sheep know the sheep. And, as you come into this position, I really believe God gives you a supernatural, extra level of insight into the people who are looking to you to protect them and guide them. And *count on* that, expect that, because God is not going to call you to do something that He's not going to equip you to do. God's going to equip you guys to do this, and *has* been.

But there's a cost. There's a *heavy* cost to being a shepherd. It's a weird thing; it truly is. Because, we are not politicians who are called to do the will of the people. We need to meet

the *needs* of the people under us. But we're not here to do their will. We're not politicians. We are elders who are here to do the will of God. And so, however much time you spend in prayer and in study of His Word and in being quiet – I've been loving Steve's book, the D60 Discipleship book – and you emphasize all through that, when you get to day whatever it is, to take time when you pray to just be still and quiet and just listen. And that's so valuable. But we all need to do that more and more and more. And, God's verse, I believe, can only be heard in silence because it's a thin whisper. He doesn't shout. He just speaks in a very calm tone of voice that's *so easy to ignore*. So let's develop those spiritual leaders. But we're not politicians here to do the will of the people. You're here to do the will of God, because they're *His* people. He's the King. And we need to discern His will at all times.

And we'll make goofs. *I've* made goofs. But we always have to get back on the bike, as Steve said, and just keep going.

One of the toughest things – I think if there's a big adjustment to make as you begin to think as a shepherd instead of a sheep, it's this: the moment you cross that line and you take on the responsibility of an elder, this one major thing changes, and it's this: once you become an elder, *what you want no longer matters*. It doesn't matter. What you *feel* is of no account. Just take what you want, what you like, and what you feel, and just put it over in the corner. Because this is how all disciples should be, but *especially* us as elders.

And this is based upon what Yeshua says. I'm always going back to John. I'm going through John for the umpteenth time and just really reading it slowly like I've never read it before. I just finished chapter 8 this morning. But in chapter 5, verse 30, chapter 6 verse 38, Yeshua says the exact same thing, *almost* with the exact same words. I want you to listen to what He says. This is amazing. He says, "*I did not come to do My will.*" Here's the perfect, sinless Son of God. You'd think if there's *anyone* we could trust to do their will, it would be Him. But He says, "I didn't come to do My will," didn't come to do it. But "I came to do the will-" in one place it says, "of My Father in heaven," another place it says, "of the One who sent Me." It's the same Person. Messiah said, "I did not come to do My will." He took His will and put it off in the corner. And then later, of course, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He says, "Let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done." That must *always* be the attitude of a shepherd, at all times. The moment I stepped into this job – it took me a while to realize it – what I want no longer matters because I'm a bondservant to the King. I shepherd *His* flock, and all that matters is, "What do *You* want?"

That's a tough change to make. And I still mess it up so often, guys. You *know* I do. But I still know what the ideal is. The ideal is Messiah. And if we're disciples of Messiah, we live life the way *He* did. And He made it very clear to us, "I don't do My will. If you're going to be My disciple, don't do yours either."

Now, if it comes down to whether you want to buy a Chevy or a Ford, I mean, who cares, pick what you want. But when it comes to shepherding the flock, it's His flock. It's *His* flock. We *have*

to know what He wants for His flock because what *He* wants is best for the flock. We *have* to do that.

Now there are all kinds of things that will come in and interfere. All kinds of things – good things – will come in and interfere. But we must have a *profound* fear of God, and of missing what He wants. We have to fear Him more than we fear each other. So, if you have to disagree with something because you know it's not the right way, you must speak up, and I appreciate the courage of the men here who do. You must fear God more than you fear the flock. You have to. And the toughest one, the toughest one for me, is to fear God more than I fear my wife. And Robin and I finally had to come to an understanding because, sometimes she would be aware of an issue that we'd be discussing and voting on, and she was so hoping it would go a certain way. And there were times when as elders, we'd get together and discuss it and pray over it, we would finally arrive at what God's will was and make a decision, and then I thought, "Oh boy, I wonder if Robin is waiting up when I get home to ask how the decision went?" And, many times I'd have to say, "Robin, I know what you want us to do, but God has led us as a group to do something different." And she just had to learn to deal with that, just had to learn. She's gotten pretty good at it over all these years. And even then, there are some things that *I* want, but when I come here, when I submit to you guys, we hear God's voice. I have to put what I want aside when God speaks to us. That's a *tough* thing to do, guys. But that's what denying yourself really means: denying *your* right to what you want for the sake of what God wants. That's the sacrifice; that's a cross we all have to take up. That's what a disciple does. And we're called to be example-setters and disciples.

So, you guys weren't picked to be on this board by accident, because you're all godly men. Every one of you, you're all godly men. And let's all up our game. Let's do better in 2021 than we did in 2020. And the next year, do even better. The flock needs us to do that. They need us to be selfless and completely God centered.

With that said, there's one thing I can guarantee: over the 25 years I've shepherded Beth Tikkun, I'd say 99% of the pain and the aggravation I've experienced all came from the people I was serving. They all came from the people I was serving. Sheep will butt and kick, and bite the one who's there to serve them. But you know, that's ok. That gives you an opportunity to live a life like Yeshua. Because the sheep never took me and beat me and bloodied me and nailed me to a cross. They never did that. And if Yeshua could be there with the life blood flowing out of His body and say, "Father forgive them; they don't know what they're doing," then every one of us can do the same. Because the pain you'll experience as a shepherd will always come from the ones you serve.

But with that said, I'm telling you right now, and I think you guys all know this, this flock, this community of Beth Tikkun, is the best one in the world. There's none like it. And I think we can all brag on it. And if you love them as much as I do, you'll go through hell for them without a second thought.

And you'll find out that the enemy hates Beth Tikkun. He hates what we do. He hates the way we serve this flock and obey God. He hates it with a white-hot passion.

And so, as an elder, I want you to always remember the pain you've experienced, we've all experienced, over the last couple of months, the suspicions, the stress. How many of you lost sleep a night or two over the last couple of months? Yeah? That misery. The doubt. The confusion. All of that is called "spiritual warfare." And the good news is, we won. We won, as a team. But that's what spiritual warfare feels like. Because the warfare in every one of us took place right here, that six inches between our ears. And, you know our brains are like a room without a door, and the enemy can just go by and toss a thought in and keep on going. And then that thought will roil around in there. It'll drive feelings and emotions and doubts and suspicions. And he, he *loves* it. But we beat him. And we're here as brothers.

And, one of you called me today – I'm not going to embarrass anyone of you – called today and said, "Grant, I don't know how I ever could have thought those things about you that I did. Would you please forgive me?" And, of course, with a full heart, forgave. But I told him, I said, "But here's the news: *that wasn't your thoughts*. That wasn't your thoughts. That was the enemy that threw that thought in there. You didn't come up with that."

This is why we have to take every thought captive to the obedience of Messiah. This is why we take every thought captive and say, "Ok, I got this thought here, but I don't know where that came from. I'm sticking it over here in a lock box until I find the truth. And then I'll know what to *do* with that thought." But until I know where that thought came from, I'm not allowing it to play havoc inside my mind, inside my emotions. That takes such a – that's *so* difficult.

And so, I'm making shepherding sound like a pretty miserable job, I know. But it *is* in some ways. It's like warfare. It's like combat. And why would any sane person sign up to go into combat? Nobody goes into combat because they like being shot at. And they don't like the blood and guts. *Nobody likes that*. You'd have to be *insane* to like that. So, why do people like your son-in-law Quentin sign up in the Marines to go into combat? Only one reason: love. They're willing to put their life on the line out of love, for their family, for their country. And if there's any other motivation for going through the kind of hell that you've experienced and will experience in the future, that has to be the one. Because you're not here to do *your* will, you're not here to do the *sheep's* will, you're here to do *God's* will, and Satan hates that because He is Satan's enemy. And when you align yourself in the service of the King, you *really* become his enemy.

So, you know what, I've often thought, "Why was this roll out of this new direction for Beth Tikkun, why was it so clunky? And, why was it *so sloppy*?" This is not Beth Tikkun's style. And I thought, "Lord, what's this?" But I look back at it now, and I see God's wisdom all over it, so all of us could go through the fire, all of us could go through some real spiritual warfare, we could wrestle with thoughts and emotions that came from the enemy, come out the other end, and say, "That was *horrible*. I never want to do that again." But then *do it again*, when it's time. But then do better. Then after that, you do better. And you do better. But this is what's in store for

anyone who's going to be the shepherd of a flock. Okay? There will be sleepless night; there will be some wounds and some scars, and there will be stress. It will put stress on your marriage. It'll put stress on your family. To a great degree, my two sons paid the price of me shepherding the flock. And that was a flaw in *my* leadership. *Don't repeat that flaw.* And that's something we'll talk about at another time.

And also, with every shepherding board, including the men sitting right here, there's a Judas. There's a Judas. I don't know who the Judas is. But I know good and well, it could very well be me. When Yeshua said, "One of you is going to betray me," they didn't all say, "I know it's this Judas over here. That's just the way it is." They all acted exactly the way they should: they said, "Is it I?" *That's* the Judas you have to worry about. Every one of us can be in that position of being a Judas, and your question should always be, "Lord, don't let me mess it up! Don't let me be the one who's weak!" Judas, he went out and performed miracles with the other apostles. He cast out demons with the other apostles. He spread the gospel of the kingdom with the other apostles, and none of them looked at him suspecting him of being the betrayer. They all said, "Is it I?" They all realized, "I have in myself the potential to betray this group." So the only Judas each of you needs to worry about is the one inside of you, the one inside of me.

I know you think I'm half joking when I tell you every day, especially on Shabbat when I walk into Beth Tikun, my prayer is, "Lord, don't let me screw it up." That's no joke. Because I realize my ability to be a Judas, to betray my Lord because I'm in a bad mood, because I'm just tired, because I've got this great idea – I'm going to go *my* way. And I think Judas had all kinds of great intentions. You know, people have written books about him, that he really wanted to force Yeshua's hand, he really wanted to *promote* the kingdom. So, he thought, "You know, if I force Yeshua's hand by going to the Pharisees, He'll *have to* proclaim Himself as the Messiah and kick out the Romans." And he turned out being Judas. We can't trust ourselves. Okay?

But I'll be perfectly honest: I trust this board of men right here I'm sitting with *a lot* more than I trust me. I feel *safe* when I'm with you. I want you all to have that same attitude. Okay?

One last thing, I want to read a passage to you. In Deuteronomy 20, this passage has been going through my mind here recently. God gives instructions for when the people get ready to go into warfare to besiege a city. And so, before they go in, before they go into battle, God, first of all, He has the priest tell them, "You shall not fear them, for Adonai your God is with you, brought you up from the land of Egypt, don't be afraid." And the cohen, the priest, will go and speak. And he'll say, "Hear oh Israel, today you are coming near to the battle against your enemies. Don't let your heart be faint. Do not be afraid. Do not panic. Do not be broken before them. For Adonai your God is the One Who goes with you to fight for you with your enemies, to save you." And then he says, "Then the officer shall speak to the people, saying, "Who is the man who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it?" or "dedicated" it. "Let him go home, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it." In other words, if there's something important in your life – and building a house is a *good* thing– but if you're in the midst of building a house, in the midst of building something, in the midst of doing something that will keep you from giving the proper amount of attention to being a shepherding elder or being a

governing elder, an elder, then it's okay! Take a break. Step back. It's perfectly fine. God gives you permission. When your house is done, then say, "Okay, my house is done. I'm ready to step back up to the plate." You understand? Take advantage of what God's telling you here. This is good. Because, if you come in here, and your mind is someplace else, and your energies are someplace else, you're not going to do a very good job, and it's going to discourage your brothers. Don't do that. Do what God gives you to do. Then come back and take up the work again that God has for you in the community.

He says, "Who is the man who has planted a vineyard and not redeemed it? Let him go return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will redeem it. Who is the man who has betrothed a woman and not married her? Let him go and return to his house lest he die in the war and another man marry her."

And then, this is the catch: "The officer shall continue speaking to the people and say, "Who is the man who is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return to his house." There's no shame. He can go do it. "But let him not melt the heart of his fellows like his heart. When the officers have finished speaking to the people, the leaders of the legions shall take command at the head of the people." In other words, if there's fear, there's a lack of courage that you sense, maybe you just need to take a break. You just take a break. Don't discourage the hearts of your brothers. But when everybody's determined, you all know what you're ready to do, you're ready to do it, then you take your position at the head of the people, and the enemy doesn't get to the flock *unless they get through you*. Do you understand? You're the wall of protection between the enemy and the community. Does that make sense?

This is very real stuff, and I thank God for all the pain and agony and stress of the last couple months. Because, if you ever doubted this was real before, you don't doubt it now. Right?

As I look into your eyes, I see you love me. I know you love me. I love you too. I see you love each other. There's no division here. There's none! There's zero. It was all a fantasy. It was all an imagination. It was all a fraud. It was all a lie. *We all want the same thing*. And that's the best thing for Beth Tikkun over the dark days ahead as we lead them into the uncertain future. It's certain to God, but He's unveiling it to us a day at a time. *We all want the same thing*. We want productive families. We want wonderful children who are fulfilled and grow up in Torah. We want good marriages. We want a great, thriving, fruitful community. *We all want the same thing*. Alright? Amen? [Amen]

Ok, so, with that I'm just going to turn off the tape and we'll continue this. It won't be quite as intense next time, I hope. I can't do this too often. But, I hope that these words to you guys and to the community, whoever listens to these, will have a better idea of what your elders are going through so you can *pray* for these men, because they're the ones in the front lines. And, I can attest to you now, go on the record that these are godly men, good men, who are sold out to the Lord. Okay?

So, with that, we'll say goodbye.