

## John Kozlowski

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**From:** John Kozlowski <John@Kozlowski.org>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 3, 2021 5:56 PM  
**To:** Dorothy-Jane Kozlowski (Outlook); 'Dorothy-Jane Kozlowski'; 'Erika Leigh Sams'; 'Jack Cross'; 'Tirzah Kozlowski'; 'Julia Williams'; 'Isaac Owen Williams'; Jim Cross (JimCross@LexcomInc.net); 'jimcross45@gmail.com'  
**Subject:** Overseers and Religion

Family,

I took a ten mile hike yesterday to areas of Cleveland that I haven't been to in years. While walking down Wildwood I saw a short distance down a side street a sign for tomatoes in front of a house. Since the farmers' market is closed until June, I went to the home and there was an older woman sitting out front and a bunch of boxes of tomatoes. I did get some tomatoes and onions (of course). But then an obvious question came to mind. The woman did not seem in good health and overtly lonely. James 1:27 came to mind: *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."* Was now a time for me to live it? If so how and how not?

I did interact with her for maybe two minutes, but was not sure of my words.

Today in a long call with Chris we went deep into a discussion of this and examining the Scripture. As so often happens marvelous things were found by examining the words.

When "religion" or "religious" is used in Scripture, it is not always from the same Greek word. When Paul uses it in Acts 17:22 it is fear of a demon, which is not a flattering statement. But in James 1:27 it is "thrēskeia" which is religious ceremonies. When used in Acts 26:5 or Colossians 2:18, it is again not flattering. But in James it is what is *"pure and undefiled before God, the Father"*. It does not describe institutional ceremonies or public gatherings. Rather it describes what I did for about 2 minutes on Wildwood. This is a concept I have grabbed onto for a long time now and it can be scary to do.

Then came the baseball bat to the head when we examined "visit" or "episkeptomai". Since I am slowly gaining some understanding of the Greek it was quick to see this is the verb from of a noun that I have studied: "episkopē", which is investigation, visitation, or oversight. This got us back to the long discussion on the issue that the "elder" is simply someone who is "older" and not an office in an institutional church.

We examined the obvious two passages in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If you read it for what it says, and not the added meaning put in by the institutional church, there simply is no institution, but the call to someone who is older.

For example: 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:1 *"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task."* In the ESV, KJV, and NASB you see "office", which is an added word and not in the Greek. The overseer or "episkopē", is one who looks into something, literally a skeptic, or visits someone.

We see "episkopē" in verses like 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:12 *"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."* It is the exact same spelling in the Greek as in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:1. The point is about Christ's return, and His visit and perhaps investigation. You can see it again in Luke 19:44.

Once you shed the presuppositions of offices in the institutional church, because you have found that the Lord did not call for the institutional church, and read the Scripture for what it says, then you can live more fully in Philippians 3:14 *“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* The “goal” in that verse is “skopos” which is the root of “episkopē”. There is a remarkable consistency here.

Then when you see an old woman selling tomatoes, it is not a question of will she offer a good deal, but this is my opportunity to love in obedience to Christ. It is a call to visit. The role of an “episkopē”, which is required for the “presbuteros” or elder who has matured as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was challenged to back up my arguments from Scripture today, and as you can see above, a serious effort was made to do that. That is not the model you see in Jim Cross, or institutional church leadership. But there is hope for all of them, but they have to both take on the Lord via His Scripture, and a brother attempting to reconcile with them. I will continue to try.

Then there is my wife and kids. I want to prepare them to do what I just did in this email. To make a defense for the hope that is within them. Do they have that hope? I can’t answer that, but it is clear from Deuteronomy 6 that I must prepare them. So as plans are worked out for my visit to Lexington, I need to set forth examples for them like this. I need to work out how. Any suggestions would be helpful.

2021 will probably be a difficult year for a whole lot of people. There is also hope for tremendous joys for some. It is my hope that joy comes to my family in the form of reconciliation. That remains my goal.

I love you all, especially my wife!!!

*John Kozłowski*

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*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

Ecclesiastes 12:13