

## Church Organization and Leadership

As the apostles and evangelists traveled abroad preaching the gospel. Those who believed their message would form local churches in the places where they lived. As we saw last week they would come together on the first day of the week and break bread.

This morning we will overview how these congregations were organized. As I read my NT the pattern that emerges is that of a congregational structure that is: **Simple, Local, Familial**.

- I. **Simple** - The apostles' taught a simple form of congregational organization.
  - A. When fully developed, a church would have elders:
    1. Acts 14:23 - *Paul and Barnabas **appointed elders for them in each church** and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*
    2. Titus 1:5 - *For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should **set in order the things that are lacking**, and appoint **elders** in every city as I commanded you.*
  - B. Elders were also known as bishops and pastors:
    1. Ac 20:17 *From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the **elders** of the church.* (Rest of the chapter records his conversation with these men)
    2. Acts 20:28-29 *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*
    3. 1Pe 5:1-2 *The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**,*
    4. These men were to be appointed based on character, and spiritual giftedness not status or worldly accomplishment.
      - a. 1Ti 3:1-7
      - b. Ti 1:6-9
  - C. There was always a *plurality* in each congregation.
    1. Acts 14:23 *Paul and Barnabas appointed **elders** for them in each church*

2. Acts 20:17 - Paul...called for the **elders/shepherds/bishops** of the church.
3. Acts 21:18 - The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the **elders** were present.
4. Titus 1:5 appoint **elders** in every city as I commanded you.
5. Phil 1:1 To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the **Bishops** and deacons.
6. The NT model is that of a single Pastor at the head of the church.
  - a. Jesus is the chief shepherd.
  - b. Under him are a co-equal plurality of pastors/shepherds/elders/overseers.
  - c. Each elder is a part of that flock and is like everyone else, under the authority of the elders.
  - d. The NT model is one of shared leadership and mutual accountability.
- D. The New Testament churches also had **deacons** (servants) who also are men of godly character and ability as outlined in (1Tim 3:8-13).
- E. So, the first principle of local church government is that it *Simple*. The second is...

II. **Local** - Though the church was always to have a global presence and a world altering influence. It was never intended to have an earthly governmental structure larger than the local church.

- A. Jesus functions as Head *through* His Spirit by the authoritative word of His apostles.
  1. There is nothing in scripture about an abiding *global* or even *regional* church government.
  2. Instead we find local congregations, operating independently, under the leadership of their self-appointed shepherds/elders/bishops.
- B. Their oversight was limited to those "*among*" them -
  1. Acts 20:28 *take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**.*
  2. 1Pet 5:2 **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**.
- C. They had no authority over anything beyond their local congregation.

1. They are answerable to God for the souls under their direct oversight.
  2. The biblical model is a shepherd tending a flock, not a CEO or Board directing a *multi-church organization*.
- D. The result is independent, autonomous congregations. No single bishop over multiple churches, no synod, council or convention.

III. **Familial** - There are several metaphors used in scripture: *Body, Bride, Family*.

- A. 1 Tim 3:14-15 *Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in **God's household**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.*
- B. 1 Tim 5:1-2 *Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your **father**. Treat younger men as **brothers**, 2 older women as **mothers**, and younger women as **sisters**, with absolute purity.*

Conclusion: The church's power in the world is not worldly power, wealth, earthly stature, but by its influence. We are the family of God who are being transformed by the Spirit of God into the likeness of Jesus Christ our head. As this occurs, we show the world the way to live and invite the world to come.