

How We Govern the Church

Biblical Principles of Church Government

“And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

Colossians 1:18

Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the foundation of the church. His honor and glory is to be the objective of every act, function and motive of the church, both corporately and individually (Colossians 1:18; 2:19; Ephesians 1:22-23).

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

God has provided His plans and direction for the church in His Word. The Bible contains and reflects His instructions, counsel and purpose for the church, and for every believer (Psalm 119; Matthew 22:37-39; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17).

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit is the source of power for the church. The Holy Spirit indwells, leads and empowers individual believers and the corporate church enabling each to reach the fullness of their potential in Christ (Ephesians 1:13; 5:18; Galatians 5:16).

How the Church is Led

God's plan for leadership is revealed in Scripture.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:11-13

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit certain individuals with specific gifts, “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers”, brought the local church into existence through their teaching and preaching (Ephesians 4:11-13, Romans 15:17-20).

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.”

Titus 1:5

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”

Acts 20:28

As churches were established, and people became qualified, elders/pastors were appointed to continue the pastor-teaching ministry in the local church. To these elders/pastors was given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of that particular church and the shepherding of its members (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28-32, 1 Peter 5:1-4).

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

1 Timothy 5:17

Elders/Pastors give more time to spiritual leadership and are called to fill more demanding responsibilities. They are therefore worthy of “double honor” (1 Timothy 5:17).

“So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”

Acts 6:2-3

Leaders are also appointed to serve the church, particularly in areas of responsibility that would otherwise prohibit the elders/pastors from carrying out their biblical responsibilities (Acts 6:1-7).

These leaders, along with all members form the local church. The Bible reveals a church governance model of a plurality of Godly leaders, under the oversight of elders/pastors.

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Hebrews 13:17

In response to the Biblical pattern of leadership, members of the local church are instructed in Scripture to lovingly support their leaders and to submit to their leadership (1 Corinthians 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17).