**Print 62**

**Ecclesiology: What’s So Great About the Church?**

***Singapore Bible College***

Rick Griffith, ThM, PhD

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# Introduction

## Syllabus

### Course Descriptions

**CCTE**

Singapore’s recent rise in “home churches” raises the question: what exactly is a church, anyway? Why does it exist and who should lead it? How can we keep it pure and yet still show grace towards those who don’t measure up? What about baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the role of women? Who has the final say in church decisions? How do we preserve unity with other churches and within our own? What is God’s plan for growth and implementing change? These are plenty of tough questions to address in six weeks, but we will give it our best try.

**Degree**

This course addresses the nature, purpose, multiplication, leadership, discipline, ordinances, unity, and body life of the local church. Students see a variety of opinions on each of these subjects but should support their own conviction from Scripture.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course the student should be able to … (goal “l” only for degree students)

#### Articulate the biblical nature of the local church (define what the church is).

#### Articulate the biblical purpose of the local church (show what the church is supposed to do) so as to develop priorities for change in his own ministry.

#### Apply the distinction between function and form along with the roles of Scripture, history, and culture to bring relevance to local church issues.

#### Know how church multiplication (evangelism and growth) can occur in his ministry.

#### Explain from Scripture the proper means of church discipline in order to restore sinning believers in his local church.

#### Implement the most important NT principles of leadership.

#### Discern the NT pattern for church leadership selection in order to evaluate the student’s own leadership style and the offices in his assembly.

#### Defend what the student considers the most biblical church government structure after studying various alternate views.

#### Prove from Scripture one’s own view on the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) to make these celebrations more meaningful.

#### Implement biblical principles of body life to meet edification needs in his church.

#### Know the importance of and process towards unity in the student’s local body and with other churches.

#### Implement his own biblically-based philosophy of ministry showing the steps his church will follow to train a new believer to become a spiritual leader who is mature in Christ.

### Course Requirements (and Percentage of Course Grade)

**Grading Percentages for Each Type of Student**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Audit** | **CCTE** | **Degree** |
| Reading Grudem | - | 50% | 25% |
| Online Moodle Quizzes | - | 50% | 25% |
| Written Assignments | - | - | 25% |
| Online Moodle Final Exam | - | - | 25% |

#### Reading of portions of these notes (CCTE) and outside readings (Degree) will be reported on the quiz for each session. The main book to degree students to read is the Ecclesiology section of Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology.*

#### Quizzes over the reading assignments will be given according to the course schedule. These will be short (10-15 minutes) with 5-10 questions.

#### Written Assignments

##### Leadership Dynamics Questions (10%): Write on a separate piece of paper answers to the four exercises and four questions in *Church Dynamics*, 173-178 (Lesson 9 at the end of these notes). This should be between 2-4 pages long. Don’t worry about reading *the Measure of a Man* noted in this chapter.

##### Equipping Project (10%): Complete this adapted BEE Study Project #9 (*Church Dynamics*, 178): Summarize the nature, purpose, and potential discipline steps needed to guide a new Christian into a leadership position within your church. Outline the steps you will take and the minimum time needed at each stage of the process. You may use diagrams if you wish. This should be 2-4 pages long.

#### Final Exam: This will assess your comprehension of the course notes only (not the readings). This exam is either: (1) a combination multiple-choice, short answer, fill-in the blanks, and essay exam, or (2) simply an essay exam.

N.B. Each of the preceding requirements has a 10% grade penalty per class day late. Also, points may be deducted for not including your full name on assignments, exceeding the page limit, and improper grammar or spelling.

### Course Bibliography

* Books with an asterisk are on reserve in the library.

† Books with a cross as well include required readings.

Baker, Don. *Beyond Forgiveness: The Healing Touch of Church Discipline.* Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1984. 245 pp.

A narrative account how Hinson Memorial Baptist Church in Oregon helped restore a staff member who fell into sexual sin, addressing biblical principles throughout; while the author succumbed to the same sin within ten years, the book still has much value.

Gangel, Kenneth O. “Marks of a Healthy Church.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (October-December 2001): 467-77.

“This article suggests that healthy churches are measured in spiritual terms, follow biblical patterns of ministry, are based on theological foundations, focus on a ministry model, and adopt scriptural models of leadership” (pp. 467-68).

Getz, Gene A. *Sharpening the Focus of the Church.* Rev. ed. Wheaton, IL: SP Pub., 1975, 1984. 359 pp.

A foundational book in designing relevant church ministries to fulfill the biblical purposes of the church: worship, edification, and multiplication.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . *The Walk: The Measure of Spiritual Maturity.* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994; reprint, Aenon International Pte. Ltd., 49 Jalan Pemimpin #03-06/07, APS Industrial Bldg., Singapore 577203, 1997. 226 pp.

Clarifies that a biblical assessment of personal and church ministry is not numerical but measured in hope, faith, and love—achieved through the Word, fellowship, worship, generosity, outreach, and commitment to the family.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* Leicester, England: IVP and Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. 1264 pp.

His section on the church (pp. 853-1088), like the book as a whole, is clearly written, including helpful discussions on issues missed by many other theologies such as the power of the church, means of grace, government, worship, and spiritual gifts. I disagree with him, however, that prophecy is for every believer.

Kitchens, Ted. *Aftershock: What to Do When Leaders (and Others) Fail You.* Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1992. 245 pp.

Biblical and practical help from my Texan pastor on church discipline, including which sins are worthy of discipline and how to keep your pastor from falling into sin.

MacArthur, John. *The Church: The Body of Christ.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973. 199 pp.

A theological framework to understand the nature of the church as primarily under the metaphor of the human body (cf. 1 Cor. 12).

Perry, Lloyd M., and Shawchuck, Norman. *Revitalizing the 20th Century Church.* Chicago: Moody, 1982. 188 pp.

Methods and case studies to lead churches through lay-involved self-studies in home meetings to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in order to raise up people who will be part of the solutions rather than the problems.

Saucy, Robert L. *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

One of the more readable books on the newest branch of dispensationalism that argues for greater continuity between To and the church than noted in the past, especially by advocating a present rule of Christ in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *The Church in God’s Program.* Chicago: Moody, 1972. 254 pp.

A biblical evaluation of many aspects of the church in both its theological (e.g., church vs. To) and practical aspects (e.g., church government).

Shelly, Marshall. *Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church.* Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 1985; distrib. By Waco, TX: Word Books. 153 pp.

Book 1 of the Leadership Series which deals with practical problems of pastoral ministry; this one addresses how to keep well-meaning saints from ruining your ministry.

Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to Its Rightful Place in the Church*. 2nd. Ed. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1986, 1988. 288 pp.

The most thorough evaluation available on eldership as the biblical means of church leadership for all cultures.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . *The New Testament Deacon.* Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1992. 192 pp. pb. US$10.

Builds upon recent books and articles that clarify the role of the local church leaders called to fill a servant role in the body; serves as a nice companion to his book on elders.

Tillapaugh, Frank R. *Unleashing the Church: Getting People Out of the Fortress and Into Ministry.* Ventura, CA: Regal, 1982. 224 pp.

Advice from a Denver pastor on how to help members to dream for Christ and fulfill their vision rather than expect the pastor to do all the vision-casting in a top-down manner.

Watson, David. *I Believe in the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979.

Fresh insights from an Anglican vicar on the nature of the church and how the church can succeed in her role—some surprising comments about immersion as well.

**CCTE Course Schedule**

**6 evenings taught for CCTE credit in Jan-Feb 2014**

Please use your SBC username and password to take your online quiz before midnight each Monday at <https://www.sbc.edu.sg/moodle/login/index.php>. While you should read more than you are quizzed on, quiz questions cover only the underlined pages of the notes for that night (5 or 10 questions).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Session*** | ***Date (Tue)*** | ***Topic & Class Notes to Read*** | ***Pages on Quiz*** |
|  |  |  |  |
| 1 | 14 Jan | **Syllabus &**  **Nature of the Church**   * Definitions (7-9) | No quiz |
|  |  | * Metaphors (10-13) |  |
|  |  | * Purpose (14-15) |  |
|  |  | * Function vs. Form (16-21) |  |
|  |  | * Church, Israel & New Covenant (22-34) |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 2 | 21 Jan | **Leadership**   * Biblical Goals (35-36) | Quiz 1: Leadership Qualifications (63-85) |
|  |  | * Aims & Principles (37) | *Please skim the other pages* |
|  |  | * Old Testament Forms (38-52) |  |
|  |  | * New Testament Forms (52-62) |  |
|  |  | * Qualifications (63-85) |  |
|  |  | * Decision Making (86-88) |  |
|  |  | * Government (89-94) |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | **28 Jan** | **No Class for CNY Break** | **No Assignments** |
|  |  |  |  |
| 3 | 4 Feb | **Discipline**   * Nature & Neglect (95-97) | Quiz 2: Discipline (95-102) |
|  |  | * Process (97-98) |  |
|  |  | * Rationale & Sins (98-102) |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 4 | 11 Feb | **Baptism**   * Backgrounds (104-8) | Quiz 3: Baptism (104-117) |
|  |  | * Views (109-116) |  |
|  |  | * Questions/Relevance (116-17) |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 5 | 18 Feb | **Lord’s Supper**   * Backgrounds (118-21) | Quiz 4: Lord’s Supper (118-27) |
|  |  | * Views & Questions (122-27) |  |
|  |  | **Edification**   * Spiritual Gifts (128) |  |
|  |  | * Small Groups (128-31) |  |
|  |  | **Multiplication** (132-33) |  |
|  |  | **Implementing Change** (134) |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 6 | 25 Feb | **Unity & Separation** (135-37) | Quiz 5: Women (138-45) |
|  |  | **The Role of Women** (138-45) |  |

## Author’s Biographical Data



**Rick & Susan Griffith**

**Stephen (24), Kurt (27) & John (21)**

**Background**

“Never say ‘never.’” Rick and Susan Griffith both learned this age-old tip the hard way.

Rick recalls sitting in his elementary school classes thinking, “If there’s one thing I’ll *never* become it’s a *teacher.* Imagine saying the same stuff over and over, year after year!”

Yet after trusting Christ in junior high and acquiring a taste for teaching the Word of God, Rick’s attitude began to change. After his business degree at California State University, Hayward, and Master of Theology degree (Pastoral Ministries) and the Doctor of Philosophy degree (Bible Exposition) from Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, Dr. Griffith soon found himself on the other end of the classroom—and loving it!

Susan, from Yucaipa, California, also learned not to say “never.” As she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in piano at Biola University, several friends married and worked to put their husbands through three more years of seminary training. “I’ll never do that!” she exclaimed. Soon afterwards she invested three years (1981-1983) singing together with her future husband in the Crossroads, Campus Crusade's traveling music team in Asia. This nine member Philippines-based group shared Christ in the Philippines, China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Macau, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

In December 1983 Susan’s “never” became a reality. She and Rick were married and like Jacob and Rachel of old, Susan also worked for her mate. During these seven seminary years Rick served as a pastor, corporate chaplain, and International Students church consultant. Susan taught women's Bible studies and often ministered by singing. Their primary church in Texas is Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth.

The Griffith family now includes three sons: Kurt (27 yrs.), Stephen (24 yrs.), and John (21 yrs.). During home assignment they minister mainly from the First Baptist Church of Yucaipa, California.

**Ministry**

However, since 1991 the Griffiths’ home has been Singapore where Rick serves as Doctor of Ministry Director with 30 other full-time faculty at Singapore Bible College. SBC has about 500 full-time students from 23 countries and 25 denominations, as well as many professionals in the certificate-level Centre for Continuing Theological Education (CCTE). During his first term he taught a variety of courses: Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, New Testament Backgrounds, Eschatology (the study of future things), Evangelism, Pastoral Epistles, Psalms, Homiletics (preaching), Hebrew Exegesis, and four Old Testament exposition courses. For many years he also taught Pentateuch, Gospels, Eschatology (theology of the future), Ecclesiology (theology of the church), and Pneumatology (theology of the Holy Spirit). Now he teaches mostly Bible Exposition classes, including Homiletics, World of the OT & NT, and NT Survey. He has also written three Advanced Studies in the Old and New Testament courses available for free at the Internet Biblical Seminary (www.internetseminary.org).

Dr. Griffith loves the variety and strategic nature of his teaching. He invests his life into Anglicans from Sri Lanka, Lutherans from Singapore, Presbyterians from Korea, Conservative Baptists from the Philippines, and missionaries from Campus Crusade, OMF, and Operation Mobilisation—sometimes all in one class! One class had 17 of the 20 students training for ministry outside of Singapore. Nearly all SBC graduates enter pastoral or missionary ministries due to Asia’s shortage of trained leaders.

Ministry opportunities abound. Rick and Susan have conducted premarital counseling for students and their home has an open door to students and guests traveling through Singapore. They have sung in evangelistic thrusts and in 1992 also participated in founding International Community School, an expatriate Christian primary and secondary school in Singapore now with 430 students. The Griffiths are missionaries with WorldVenture and Rick serves as the Singapore field leader.

Dr Griffith also enjoys several other partnerships. He also serves as Asia Translation Coordinator for "The Bible... Basically International" Seminars; Web Author & Editor, Internet Biblical Seminary; and itinerate professor at Lanka Bible College (Sri Lanka), Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Union Bible Training Center (Mongolia), Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary, and BEE training in three restricted access countries.

In 2006 the Griffiths also helped begin Crossroads International Church, Singapore. Here “Dr. Rick” is “Pastor Rick” in his role as pastor-teacher and elder. The church meets at 4 PM on Sundays at the Metropolitan YMCA at 60 Stevens Road from 4:00-5:30 PM. See cicfamily.com for details.

In 2009 Dr. Griffith began the [biblestudydownloads.com](http://biblestudydownloads.com/Site/Homepage.html) website where his courses are available for free download. This includes 5000 pages of course notes in Word and pdf formats, about 400 PowerPoint presentations in English, and hundreds of translations of these by his students into 35 languages. Current languages include Arabic, Bangla, Bisaya, Burmese, Chin, Chinese, Dutch, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Kachin, Khmer, Kiswahili, Korean, Lotha, Malay, Malayalam, Mao, Mizo, Mongolian, Nepali, Nias, Paite, Russian, Spanish, Sumi, Tagalog, Tamil, Tangkhul, Tenyidie, Thai, Vaiphei, and Vietnamese.

**Field**

Singapore Bible College is strategically located at the “ministry hub” of Southeast Asia, the Republic of Singapore. A small island of only 14 by 26 miles, Singapore is a city-nation located on the tip of the Malayan Peninsula in Southeast Asia. The population of this multi-cultural society is 75 percent Chinese, 15 percent Malay and 8 percent Indian. Other groups include Filipinos, Thais, Japanese, Americans, and Europeans. This beautiful island nation, with dynamic growth in churches and missionary force, has been called the “Antioch of Asia.” The Singaporean cross-cultural missionary force is increasingly contributing to God’s work in overseas ministries.

**Passion**

Rick’s passion is for God’s leaders to preach and live the Word of God. The servant of God’s role is clearly given in the following verses:

* Teaching obedience to what Christ taught is a key part of our commission to make disciples (Matt. 28:20)
* The priority of the apostles was teaching and prayer (Acts 6:1-16)
* Paul’s legacy to Timothy focused on exposition: “Preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2-3)

However, recent trends include the following:

* Church people are biblically illiterate—Amos lamented in his day of prosperity that there existed a “famine for hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11)
* Pastors are doing too many things
* Preachers give empty and simplistic sermons
* Attempting to be “relevant,” pastors preach what people want to hear—not what they need

Contacting Me: You can contact me at SBC by box L19 or by phone (6559-1513). Also, my home is at Block 2-302 on the SBC campus, mobile is 9113-7090, and home phone number is 6762-2011 (email griffith@sbc.edu.sg). My office hours when I can talk are from 11:00-1:00 on Thursday and Friday and afternoons on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Let’s have lunch too!

Copying Class Notes: Permission granted until you make a lot of money publishing them. The same applies to taping lectures.

### Schedule (Reading Report)

Name Box Sem. Grade

Please tick the last column if completed in full on time. Note if completed late and/or partially.

**Session Day (Time) Subject Assignment**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | Mon 9:30-10:20 | Syllabus & Introduction |  |  |
| 2 | Mon 10:25-11:15 | **Nature**   * Definitions (7-9) |  |  |
| 3 | Mon 11:30-12:20 | * Metaphors (10-13) |  |  |
| 4 | Mon 12:25-1:15 | * Purpose (14-15) |  |  |
| 5 | Mon 2:30-3:20 | * Function vs. Form (16-21) |  |  |
| 6 | Mon 3:35-4:25 | * Church, Israel & NC (22-34) |  |  |
| 7 | Tues 9:30-10:20 | **Leadership**   * Biblical Goals (35-36) | Quiz #1 |  |
| 8 | Tues 10:25-11:15 | * Aims & Principles (37) |  |  |
| 9 | Tues 11:30-12:20 | * Old Testament Forms (38-52) |  |  |
| 10 | Tues 12:25-1:15 | * New Testament Forms (52-62) |  |  |
| 11 | Tues 2:30-3:20 | * Qualifications (63-85) | Read notes, 63-85 = 22 |  |
| 12 | Tues 3:35-4:25 | * Decision Making (86-88) | Grudem, 904-23 = 20 |  |
| 13 | Wed 9:30-10:20 | * Government (89-94) | Quiz #2  Grudem, 923-45 = 22 |  |
| 14 | Wed 10:25-11:15 | **Discipline**   * Nature & Neglect (95-97) | Grudem, 887-901 = 14 |  |
| 15 | Wed 11:30-12:20 | * Process (97-98) |  |  |
| 16 | Wed 12:25-1:15 | * Rationale & Sins (98-102) |  |  |
| 17 | Wed 2:30-3:20 | **Lord’s Supper**   * Backgrounds (118-21) | Grudem, 988-99 = 12 |  |
| 18 | Wed 3:35-4:25 | * Views & Questions (122-27) |  |  |
| 19 | Thurs 9:30-10:20 | **Baptism**   * Backgrounds (104-8) | Quiz #3  Grudem, 966-84 = 23 |  |
| 20 | Thurs 10:25-11:15 | * Views (109-116) |  |  |
| 21 | Thurs 11:30-12:20 | * Questions/Relevance (116-17) |  |  |
| 22 | Thurs 12:25-1:15 | **Multiplication** (132-33) | *Church Dynamics*, 173-78 & Questions |  |
| 23 | Thurs 2:30-3:20 | **Edification**   * Spiritual Gifts (128) |  |  |
| 24 | Thurs 3:35-4:25 | * Small Groups (128-31) |  |  |
| 25 | Fri 9:30-10:20 | **Implementing Change** (134) | Quiz #4  Study Project Due |  |
| 26 | Fri 10:25-11:15 | **Unity** (135-37) | Grudem, 873-84 = 12 |  |
|  | Fri 11:30-12:20 | **Study Period** | Study for final exam |  |
|  | Fri 12:25-1:15 | **Study Period** | Study for final exam |  |
| 27 | Fri 2:30-3:20 | **Final Exam** |  |  |
| 28 | Fri 3:35-4:25 | **Final Exam** |  |  |

# The Nature of the Church

## The Ideal: Defining the Church

### An Exercise

Mark with an “A” each of the following definitions of the word “church” that you agree with, and place a “D” by each definition with which you disagree. [[1]](#footnote-1)

#### \_\_\_\_ A group of people owning a building especially dedicated to religious services, carried out under the leadership of an ordained minister.

#### \_\_\_\_ The building where religious activities take place.

#### \_\_\_\_ A specific block of time dedicated to group religious activities on Sunday.

#### \_\_\_\_ An organization made up of all religious groups having a common name and a common state or national headquarters.

#### \_\_\_\_ All persons, living or dead, who from the time of Pentecost to the present day have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior.

#### \_\_\_\_ A body of believers united by faith in Christ, in the full biblical sense, whether or not they are members of an actual organization; the unity of the entire body of believers of all times and all places.

#### \_\_\_\_ A living organism—a body with a personality which is alive and breathing and feeling and acting and, yes, suffering and sorrowing and bleeding, and in constant need of healing and restoration, both individually and corporately, local and worldwide.

#### \_\_\_\_ Any group of human beings who call themselves Christians and meet regularly for religious purposes.

#### \_\_\_\_ Any group of baptized human beings that meets regularly for religious purposes.

#### \_\_\_\_ Any association of two or more saved persons for the purposes of worship, community, and/or outreach.

#### \_\_\_\_ A group of believers that meets regularly to pray, break bread together, have fellowship, and study the Word.

#### \_\_\_\_ A group of saved and baptized persons that meets regularly.

#### \_\_\_\_ A group of saved and baptized persons that meets regularly under human leadership to worship God.

### Your Own Definition of the Church

“The church is…

### Various Definitions of Popular Groups[[2]](#footnote-2)

#### The Catholic Concept

##### The church “is a divinely constituted society consisting of members from every race and nation, all holding one faith, all using the same sacraments as means of holiness and salvation, and all governed benignly by the successor of St. Peter, the vicar of Christ, the pope . . .” (*The New Catholic Dictionary* [NY: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1929], 180-81).

##### This Catholic definition challenges Christ’s headship of the Church.

#### The Anglican Concept

##### “The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance . . .” (Article 19 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England).

##### The Anglican Church is, of course, under the temporal headship of the King or Queen of England.

#### The Reformed Concept

##### “The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect.... The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children…” (The Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 25).

##### A unique element here is that baptized children are deemed Christians.

#### The Baptist Concept

##### “The church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel; being baptized into that faith” (The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1646, Article 33).

##### Some Baptists see the reality of the universal church and some do not.

### A Biblical Definition

“The church is the living community of people in Christ Jesus,

organized to fulfill corporately a threefold purpose:

worship, edification, and multiplication”[[3]](#footnote-3)

### The Greek Meaning of *Ecclesia*

#### Basic Meaning: a group in a geographical area called out from their area for a common purpose

The OT used the word for the “congregation” or “assembly” (Tyndale’s translation)—or, as Luther rendered it, the “community.”

#### NT Usage

##### Unique elements:

The church is a body—not a building.

In ancient Athens, the citizens were very appreciative of their privilege to be a vital part of the city-state—and they recognized their responsibility as well. When a herald would call a meeting of the citizens, each would close his shop, drop what he was doing, and walk out of the city, past the Acropolis and to the next hill for a meeting. This group became known as the *ecclesia*, or “called out ones.”

Some citizens, of course, loved the *privileges* of being part of the city-state but felt no *responsibility* for it. They left their shops open and refused to join the *ecclesia*, so the latter called them *idiotes*, or ones who did their own thing for selfish purposes. We derive our English word “idiot” from this group of lazy people characterized by self concern and social irresponsibility (CHURCH definition of—“called out ones” by Stuart Briscoe, Singapore missionary retreat, 92).

##### Applications to Universal and Local Church

For the first three centuries of Christianity, the body of believers was always called the *ecclesia*. Only in the time of Constantine in the 4th century did the term *kurioikos*, “house of the Lord,” come about, from which through the Latin we arrive at our English word “church.” The early Christians never associated themselves with a building called the “church” (CHURCH body, not a building by W.A. Criswell at DTS chapel). They saw themselves only as the *ecclesia*, or “called out ones”—called out from the world to be God’s own people!

### Metaphors for the Church

#### Metaphor Worksheet: Read the passages below and fill in the boxes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Metaphor**  **& Text** | **Ministry of**  **Christ** | **Ministry of**  **Church** | **Applications** |
| Body  • 1 Cor. 12  • Col. 1:18 | Sustains church for unity  LIFE of Christ | Depends upon Christ  Worship, edification | Let diversity within unity focus on Christ as the common source |
| Bride  • Eph. 5:25-27  • Eph. 3:18-19  • 2 Cor. 11:2 | Depth of love Bridegroom (Christ) has for Bride (Church)  LOVE of Christ | Purifies herself to show her love  Worship, edification | Prepare to meet Christ as a bride prepares for her wedding |
| Building/Temple  • Eph. 2:21-22  • 1 Pet. 2:4-6  • 1 Cor. 3:10-11 | Foundation Stone for growth who indwells each believer  PRESENCE of Christ | Grows together as all believers build on the foundation  Worship, edification, multiplication | Maintain unity so as not to dishonor Christ’s presence |
| Priesthood  • 1 Pet. 2:5-9  • Rev. 1:4-6  • Rev. 5:9-10  • Rev. 20:6 | Accepts worship from every Christian  DEITY of Christ | Each believer should offer a sacrifice of praise to God as a witness to the world  Worship, multiplication | No real clergy-laity distinction exists |
| Flock  • Acts 20:28  • 1 Pet. 5:4  • John 10:11, 14 | Cares for sheep as the Good Shepherd  CARE of Christ | Focus on needs of sheep rather than ministry:  rest, food, guidance, encouragement, healing, etc.  Edification | Remain within the flock for protection and care from the Shepherd |

#### A summary of key points presented in the metaphors:[[4]](#footnote-4)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **BODY** | | |
| Focus: Sustaining of Christ for Growth  Emphasis: LIFE OF CHRIST  Worship, edification | Pre-eminence of Head Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22  Dependence upon Head Col. 2:19  Unity of Members of Body   * 1 Cor. 12:13 Baptized into one body * Rom. 12:5 many parts but one body in Christ | Diversity, Interdependence of parts   * Head and body are distinct - Body is not head * Head supplies that which is necessary for growth   Application:   * All parts of the body work together when they have a common purpose. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **BRIDE** | | |
| Focus: Love of Christ  Worship, edification  Purity, Dignity (maturity) Commitment | Depth of Love of Bridegroom for bride (Eph. 5:2; 25-27; 3:18-19)  Wedding Festivities & Joy   * Bridegroom goes to get bride from her house   Procession  Christ now preparing bride   * Eph. 5:27 No spot, wrinkle. * Rev. 19:7-9 clothed in fine linen | Betrothal money: Christ purchased church with his own blood (Acts 20:28)  Church espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Matt. 9:15; 25:1)  Church to be taken by Christ to His Father’s house (John 14:3)  Church conformed to image of Christ (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **BUILDING/TEMPLE** | | |
| Focus: Presence of Christ  Worship Edification Multiplication | Christ is pre-eminent:   * Foundation (1 Cor. 3:10-11)   Cornerstone (1 Pet. 2:4-6)  Building continually Growing:   * 1 Pet. 2:4,5 - Living stone * Eph 2:21,22 - fitted together, growing   Temple - Place of God’s dwelling   * Israel HAD a temple * We ARE the temple | * Eph. 2:20 Apostles and prophets are foundation      * Matt. 16:15-18 Peter’s confession of Christ   Do not destroy temple of God by division and factions 1 Cor. 3:16, 17 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PRIESTHOOD** | | | |
| MINISTRY To God To World  Worship  Multiplication | 1 Peter 2:5-9  • Believers are all ministers; Priests to God (Rev. 1:4-6; 5:9-10; 20:6)  • Believers occupy a Mediatorial position between God and the world | | • Israel was called “Kingdom of Priests” Exod. 19:6  • Priests mediated between God and people  • OT term  (cohen) “To stand to represent another” |
|  | Contrasts: | |  |
|  | Israel:  • Certain ones out of Israel called as Priests  • High Priest entered holy of holies once a year.  • Unfinished Work, sacrifices offered continuously | Church:  • All members of the church are Priests  • All believers can enter God’s presence any time (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19)  • Finished Work (Heb. 9:24-28) |  |
|  | FUNCTION of PRIEST: offer sacrifices  Church has no atoning sacrifice to offer since Christ has offered once for all (Heb. 10:12,18).  Believer has ministry sacrifices (Worship sacrifices):  Surrender of life   * Rom. 12:1-8 * 2 Cor. 8:5   Praise: Heb. 13:15  Good works/sharing   * Heb. 13:16; * Phil. 4:17-18   Leading people to Christ:   * 1 Pet. 2:9 * Rom. 15:16   Prayer: Rev. 5:8; 8:3, 4  Conclusion/Implications:   1. No clergy-laity distinctions 2. No ritual that only one person can do (e.g. not only pastor can lead communion) 3. Fathers can baptize their children | |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FLOCK Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:3** | | |
| Focus: Leadership Followership Relationships within the church Flock: “Need” Edification  Emphasis: SHEPHERDING CARE  Teo Bulzan: A sheep that is not part of a flock will not be a sheep very long. | Church is called a flock  Jesus Christ is…   * The Good shepherd (John 10:11,14) * The Chief shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)   Elders are to Shepherd the Flock (1 Pet. 5:2)  Sheep Need:   * Rest, food, guidance, protection (Ps. 23:1-4) * Led back from going astray (Isa. 53:6) * Healing from sickness & disease, strength, binding up (broken) * Guidance to be brought back as they are lost (Ezek. 34:4, 6) * Encouragement from being distressed/downcast * Shepherd to care for them (Matt. 9:36) | Israel was called the “Lord’s Flock”  (Jer. 13:17; Zech. 10:3) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Wrong Tendency** | **Correction** |
| Shepherds | Dominate those they lead  Be possessive/Controlling | 1 Pet. 5:2,3 Voluntarily, not for gain; nor lording it over but being examples.  Acts 20:28 Flock of God  1 Pet. 5:4 Chief Shepherd evaluates  Heb. 13:17 Must give account |
| Sheep | Be independent  Flock in Danger:  John 10:1,8 Thief, Robber Acts 20:29,30 Savage Wolves  Leadership extremes in improperly addressing dangers:  • Permissive (too little control)  • Legalistic (too much control) | Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them... advantage to you. |

The five metaphors illustrate various aspects of the three major purposes of the church. Write the metaphor within the appropriate section below to show which purpose it illuminates:

Flock

Bride

Body

**WORSHIP**

**EDIFICATION**

*To Believers*

*To Christ*

Building

Priesthood

**MULTIPLICATION**

*To Unbelievers*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **METAPHORS VIOLATED HISTORICALLY** | |
| • Body | Church came to be seen as the physical body of Christ on earth; its leadership became the direct representative of Christ on earth |
| • Bride | Church began to adorn itself with external wealth which led to impurity rather than be adorned by Christ himself with the true inner wealth and purity |
| • Priests | Church leaders began to function as OT priests so that a clergy - laity split developed; Church practices became holy rituals like OT sacrifices |
| • Building | The external building became “holy” like tabernacle; People began referring to the building as “the house of the Lord.” |
| • Flock | The shepherd-sheep image of Scripture was replaced with a business model. Rather than having a business administrator, churches now have an “executive pastor” and the senior shepherd is called the CEO. |

### Other Metaphors for the Church

#### Branches on the Vine (John 15:1-10)

#### Kingdom

##### Kingdom of Light (Col. 1:13)

##### Kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17)

#### Household/Family (Eph. 2:19)

#### “Every biblical metaphor of the church, without exception, emphasizes its unity. The church is one bride with one husband; one flock with one shepherd; one set of branches on one vine; one kingdom with one king; one family with one father; one building with one foundation; one body with one head, Jesus Christ”[[5]](#footnote-5)

## Evaluation: Is my church achieving the threefold purpose?

***How well is your church doing in these three areas?***

### Worship: Is your church body giving God his worth or just attending services?

### Edification: How well are the believers ministering to one another?

### Multiplication: How well is your church growing numerically?

## Action Plan: How can my church achieve its God-given purposes?

### Relevant Ministry: Functions versus Form[[6]](#footnote-6)

#### Distinguishing between Function and Form

A crucial area each church must understand to be relevant to its own culture is where to draw the line from biblical verses cultural practices. Some churches have sacrificed biblical commands in order to match their culture. This is really not relevance at all. It is worldliness. A helpful way to avoid this is to clearly understand biblical functions before adopting forms to meet these functions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Function** | **Form** |
| What the church should do | How the church does it |
| Absolutes | Non-absolutes |
| Directives | Methods |
| Unchanging | Changing |
| Principles | Pattern |
| Organism | Organization |
| Truth | Tradition |
| Learning, Instruction, Vision | Doing, Implementation, Process |
| Message | Method |
| Studied first | Enacted later |
| Supra-cultural | Cultural |
| A command given:  Meet together (Heb. 10:24-25) | Examples of ways to meet:  Home care groups, cell groups, church services, etc. |

### Evaluate Some Practices

Are these practices supra cultural (mark with “S”) or cultural (mark with “C”)?[[7]](#footnote-7)

#### Celebrating the Lord’s Supper with white bread and red wine

#### Celebrating the Lord’s Supper on Sunday

#### Celebrating the Lord’s Supper in a church building

#### Celebrating the Lord’s Supper

#### Having a Sunday school

#### The pastor wearing a tie at church

#### The pastor receiving a full salary from the congregation

#### Having a choir during worship services

#### Guitar accompaniment in worship services

#### Handing out gospel tracts to unbelievers

#### Caring for the sick and discouraged among the church membership

#### Meeting regularly in small groups for prayer and Bible study

#### Instructing believers to regularly memorize verses of Scripture

#### Main church worship services on Sunday

#### Calling the main preacher “Rev.” or pastor

#### Church leadership by a group of elders

#### Head coverings for women during worship

### Steps to Relevance (Applying the Right Form for the Function)

How can we truly have an *indigenous* church—relevant both to the Bible as well as to the culture? What are some helpful principles to apply to a certain practice?

#### Clarify in your own mind whether the Bible commands or prohibits a certain practice (see examples immediately above). If so then you must obey Scripture over culture.

#### Even if Scripture allows a practice, it may not be best suited to your own particular culture, so evaluate the culture in which your church ministers. These questions may help:[[8]](#footnote-8)

##### What are the main cultural problems that our society faces, and how can the church solve these problems?

##### How are our church’s experiences with the government like those of the NT church with the Roman authorities?

##### What things are typical for our culture in relation to the cultures immediately surrounding ours?

##### What economical, political, and religious factors have historically determined the development of our culture to become different from those around us?

##### American culture is “production-oriented.” Some Western European cultures are very “discussion-oriented.” These characteristics are seen in church life. This orientation gives to each culture its own peculiar problems. Some cultures are very intellectually oriented. Other cultures put heavy emphasis on experience. Still other cultures value intuition and feelings. How would we typify our culture according to these concepts, and what can we determine as causes?

##### Why do people in our culture like the church, or why do they dislike the church?

##### How can our church relate optimally to non-Christians without losing its testimony?

##### What things are causing our church to lose contact with the world around us?

#### Ask not “*what* do I do” but “*why* do I practice this method, custom, or tradition?” Knowing the reason will enable you to see whether you are implementing a biblical command or simply carrying on a tradition for its own sake. For example…

##### Why do we have a Sunday night service?

##### Why do deacons lead our church when the NT mentions them in only two passages (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13) in contrast to the 191 occurrences in the Bible of the term “elders”?

##### Why is the leader of our church called “Pastor” when no one in the Bible ever had this title?

##### Why does my church almost exclusively reach people of our own ethnic origin?

#### Be willing to change—even *eager* to change! Are you flexible to change *anything* that is not biblically mandated? History has shown some key truths related to change:

##### People resist change—they fixate on forms so that the only constant is that people don’t like change.

##### People do change—but most of the time only in response to a crisis.

#### Discuss with the leaders the need for change until they agree that it is God’s time for the change.

#### Teach the people within the church the biblical and cultural rationale for the necessary change, noting that the entire church leadership agrees.

#### Prayerfully implement the needed change while simultaneously getting feedback from the people.

### Evaluating Function and Form[[9]](#footnote-9)

#### Address these questions honestly:

##### What are the various activities of my regular church ministry?

##### Which of these activities should never be changed because they are biblical?

##### Which timeless biblical principles are not being implemented in my ministry?

##### What can I learn from history that would benefit my ministry today?

##### What practice am I treating as if it is supra cultural even though it is cultural? What long-term effect can this have on my ministry?

##### What is the single most important task that I must carry out to accomplish my God-given ministry? What is second?

#### My Own Personal Assessment (correlate with above)

##### Activities of My Church

###### Preaching on Sunday morning

###### Teaching on Sunday morning

###### Worship on Sunday morning

###### Missions in Cambodia

###### Children’s Ministry

###### Youth Group

###### Prayer Meetings

##### Activities that should never be changed because they are biblical

###### Preaching, though it need not be on Sunday morning (Acts 2:42)

###### Teaching, though it need not be on Sunday morning (Acts 2:42)

###### Worship, though it need not be on Sunday morning (Psalms)

###### Missions (Acts. 1:8), though it need not always be in Cambodia

##### Timeless biblical principles not being implemented

###### Caring for the sick

###### Baptism at salvation

##### What can I learn from history that would benefit my ministry today?

###### How did ministries of compassion end up as social programs of the state rather than responsibilities of the churches?

###### Why did the church at some point stop baptizing people right after they made professions of faith in Christ?

##### What practice are you treating as if it is supracultural even though it is cultural? What long-term effect can this have on your ministry?

###### I tend to look at preaching styles as needing to be expository, even though this is not the biblical method in most cases.

###### Having a critical spirit about non-expository preaching will hinder my ability to learn from the Word in styles other than my own.

##### What is the single most important task that I must carry out to accomplish my God-given ministry? What is second?

###### My most important task is to meet the needs of my family, for if I lose my family then I lose my ministry as well.

###### Second to this is the need to be continually growing in the Word and Spirit so as to handle the Scriptures with freshness and life.

## The Church and Israel

### Is the Church the “New Israel”?

One key issue that affects our understanding of the church is whether the church has inherited the OT promises to Israel as the “new Israel” of our present age. Whether we answer “yes” or “no” to this question will bring us down two separate paths as it relates to the nature of the church.

#### Non-dispensationalists answer “yes,” saying that the church is the “new” Israel and thus there are no prophecies related to Israel that still await fulfillment.

#### Dispensationalists answer “no,” teaching more distinction between Israel and the church.

### Why is this issue significant?

Actually, it is not a theological question relevant only to scholars who love to discuss endless matters of minutia. Our answer to the question of whether the church is the “new Israel” affects us in several areas:

#### It shows us whether we should directly apply the Mosaic Law today (non-dispensational) or see it as completely fulfilled in Christ and done away with (dispensational).

#### It affects whether we will spiritualize Scripture (non-dispensational) or interpret the Bible in a normal manner (dispensational). This is especially the case in how to understand and apply many OT Prophets:

##### Do the peaceful relations between man and animals of Isaiah 11 relate to believers in the present church age (non-dispensational) or do they await future fulfillment and apply to actual lions, lambs, wolves, and snakes (dispensational)?

##### Does Ezekiel 40–48 temple spiritually depict worship in the present age by spiritualizing the text (non-dispensational) or does it refer to a literal, yet-to-be-built temple (dispensational)?

### Romans 9–11

These three chapters are the most crucial chapters in Scripture to help us see the distinctions between Israel and the church.

#### Outline of the Chapters

**Summary: God's righteousness *vindicated* in His election of Israel, who rejected Christ for works and is now partially and temporarily rejected, provides Gentile salvation to warn the Gentiles of pride and shows God’s faithfulness to His covenant nation Israel.**

A. (9:1-29) God's righteousness is revealed in His sovereign past choice of Israel so that Israel’s failure is not due to God’s unfaithfulness.

1. (9:1-5) Paul grieves that Israel has rejected Christ even though God elected Israel to receive the privileges of adoption, glory, covenants, law, temple worship, promises, and ancestry to Christ, thus showing that God is not at fault for Israel’s unbelief.

2. (9:6-18) God’s choice of Israel is illustrated with three Old Testament examples of election to affirm that His sovereign choice by grace is not something new and that Israel’s failure is not due to God’s unfaithfulness.

a. (9:6-9) Isaac’s election over Ishmael showed that being physical descendants of Abraham is insufficient for salvation since one must participate in God’s promise by faith to truly be part of Israel’s blessings.

God can choose one person over another to be a child of promise?

b. (9:10-13) Jacob’s election over Esau showed that God can choose the younger son for blessing rather than the older to serve His sovereign purpose apart from human tradition or merit.

c. (9:14-18) Pharaoh’s hardening by God’s choice demonstrated that God can elect to show mercy on whoever He wishes and harden whom He wishes.

3. (9:19-29) God proves that He is not unjust in electing some for salvation by showing mercy even in judgment through saving Gentiles and preserving a believing Jewish remnant.

\*In addition to Israel being called God’s people in Hosea 1:10; 2:23, here in Romans 9:25-26 the Hosea texts are applied to the Church also as God’s people; yet this still does not annul God’s promise to the nation. See W. Edward Glenny, “The ‘People of God’ in Romans 9:25-26,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (January-March 1995): 42-59.

B. (9:30–10:21) God's righteousness is revealed in Israel’s present trust in her own works and rejection of His offer of righteousness through faith in Christ even though this message has been preached throughout the world to Gentiles (shows man’s responsibility).

1. (9:30–10:4) Israel misses out on God’s righteousness because Jews unsuccessfully seek salvation by works while Gentiles successfully find salvation by faith in Christ.

2. (10:5-15) God's offer of salvation by faith in Christ (rather than 100% obedience to the law) is still offered to Israel and all men.

3. (10:16-21) Israel did not reject many opportunities to accept righteousness by faith because of lack of hearing or understanding the gospel of Christ, but because of the nation’s obstinate disobedience in fulfillment of OT prophecies.

C. (Ch. 11) God's righteousness will be revealed in Israel’s future since He rejected her only partially (a remnant is being saved) and temporarily (until she believes at Christ’s return) in faithfulness to His covenant, providing Gentile salvation of which they should not be proud.

1. (11:1-10) God has not rejected His people whom he foreknew (11:2a) because a remnant is now being saved.

2. (11:11-24) The present rejection of Israel is not irreversible but has the greater purpose of enabling Gentile engrafting into the Abrahamic covenant promises for salvation to provoke Israel to accept it and be restored as His future channel of blessing to the world.

\*See the study on the wild and cultivated trees on the next page.

3. (11:25-32) God has not permanently rejected His people as future salvation will come to Israel as a whole when the nation repents after all elect Gentiles have repented at the return of Christ to Jerusalem (11:26).

4. (11:33-36) God is due all glory and praise for incomparable wisdom and knowledge.

#### Summary of Romans 9—11

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **9:1-29** | **9:30–10:21** | **11:1-36** |
| Israel’s past | Israel’s present | Israel’s future |
| God elected Israel | Israel rejects God | God will reject Israel only partially and temporarily |
| Israel’s failure is not due  to God’s unfaithfulness | Israel’s failure is due to rejecting her Messiah | Israel’s failure will be neither total in scope nor final |
| A Jewish remnant has been  preserved by God | But this Jewish remnant  resists Him now | Yet this remnant will grow into an entire believing nation |
| Gentiles have also become elect of God in Christ | Gentiles are now becoming saved by faith in Christ | Gentiles should not be proud over blessings that Jews reject |
| Divine side | Human side | Divine results |
| God’s election | Man’s responsibility | God’s mercy |
| Human unbelief cannot eradicate God’s promises because they are based on the principle of sovereign election | However, God’s election in sovereign grace to fulfill His Word does not eradicate human responsibility for unbelief | Ultimately, God’s election will be justified in the salvation of the Jewish nation alive when Christ returns |

#### Gentile Engrafting[[10]](#footnote-10)

Paste in NTS, 155d

**Parts of the Tree**

4 ***Branches*** (11:17-21):

a Natural: Ethnic Israel, descendants of Abraham (9:4-5)

1) *Those remaining in or grafted in* = believing Jews who exercise the faith of Abraham (11:23-24)

2) *Those cut off* (11:19-21)= unbelieving Jews who do not exercise the faith of Abraham (hardened, 11:7b)

b Wild: Gentile humanity as a whole

1) Those grafted in = believing Gentiles (11:17b, 22)

2) Those cut off = unbelieving Gentiles (11:21b)

3 ***Trunk*** (11:24): place of spiritual blessing and responsibility in relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3b; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8)

2 ***Nourishing Sap of the Root*** (11:17b): opportunity due to God’s grace of a relationship to Abraham as his spiritual descendants (place of privilege)

1 ***Root*** (11:16-18): Abraham & the patriarchs

**Cultivated Olive Tree**

(Abrahamic Covenant)

**Wild Olive Tree**

(All Gentiles)

### Continuity & Discontinuity

One issue a lot of scholarly ink flows about is the way Israel relates to the Church. Some (esp. amillennialists and postmillennialists) argue that the Church is the “new Israel” with complete continuity between the two entities. Thus, the Church is seen to have simply replaced Israel and assumed her promises and covenants.

The other side of the spectrum is classical and revised dispensationalism that advocates a discontinuity model. In this scheme there are two separate peoples of God: Israel and the Church. The only overlap is that the believers today participate in some of the aspects of the Abrahamic and New Covenants.

I have held both views in the past, but recently have adopted a third model with some elements of progressive dispensationalism. This newer system (since 1987) emphasizes both continuity and discontinuity yet still maintains the dispensational distinctive that the Church is *not* the “new Israel.” Rather, it is a continuation of God’s covenant plan begun with Israel and continuing with a believing remnant of Israel today, along with Gentile believers who have been grafted into the Abrahamic Covenant (see Rom. 9–11; Gal. 3). Note these differences and similarities between these two entities:

Discontinuity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Israel** | **Church** |
| ***Identity*** | Physical seed of Abraham (Gal. 6:12-16) | Spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:7, 29) |
| ***Palestinian Covenant*** | Still outstanding (Deut. 30:1-10) but partly fulfilled since 1948 (Ezek. 37:1-7) | No land promise (Palestinian Covenant) can be claimed by present believers |
| ***Law*** | Required to obey the law (Exod. 19—20) | Freedom from the law (Rom. 7; Gal. 3) |
| ***Duration*** | Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) to eternity (Jer. 31:35-37) | Pentecost (Acts 2) to Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18) or even later (?) |
| ***Wrath*** | Experienced in Tribulation (Jer. 30:7) | Free from wrath (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10) |
| ***Faith*** | Shown in offering sacrifices | Shown in trusting Christ’s sacrifice |
| ***Priesthood*** | *Has* one: a special class by heredity | *Is* one: all are priests (1 Pet. 2:5) |
| ***Activity*** | Set aside between 69th & 70th “Weeks” (Dan. 9:24-27)—a part of the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) | Between 69th & 70th “Weeks” the church is a mystery unforeseen in the OT (Eph. 3:1-9; Col. 1:26) |
| ***Qualification*** | Ethnic—descendants of Abraham or Gentile proselytes who became Jews through circumcision as blessing is through Israel (1 Kings 8:41-43; Isa. 2:2-3; 19:19-25; 49:6; 51:4; 56:6-8; Zech. 14:16-19) | Non-ethnic—”Neither Jew nor Gentile” (Gal. 3:28) means a combination of Jews and Gentiles without need to become Jewish proselytes (Acts 15; Eph. 3:3, 6) |

Continuity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Israel** | **Church** |
| ***Abrahamic Covenant*** | Origin in Abraham as the father of the nation (Gen. 12:1-3) | Believers today are grafted into this same covenant (Rom. 11:17-21; cf. Gal. 3:29) |
| ***Davidic Covenant*** | Promise of a literal temple (2 Sam. 7:13) fulfilled by Solomon (1 Kings) | Functions now as a spiritual temple  (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-10) |
| ***New Covenant*** | Promised forgiveness of sins, indwelling Spirit, new heart, reunification of Israel and Judah, and knowledge of God throughout the earth (Jer. 31:31-34) | The first three aspects (forgiveness of sins, indwelling Spirit, new heart) true today in a progressive fulfillment of the covenant (Luke 22:20) |
| ***Law*** | Required to obey the Mosaic law (Exod. 19—20) | Required to obey the “law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2) or “law that gives freedom” (James 1:25; 2:12) |
| ***Salvation by*** | God’s grace through faith (Gen. 15:6) | God’s grace through faith (Rom. 4:3) |
| ***Basis of Salvation*** | Sacrificial lamb | Sacrificial Lamb |
| ***Spirit*** | Filling on leaders | Indwelling of all believers (Rom. 8:9) |
| ***Prophets*** | Provided revelation of God’s word | Foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) |
| ***Election*** | Based on grace (Mal. 1:2) | Based on grace (Eph. 1:4-6, 11) |
| ***Disobedience*** | Led to God’s discipline | Leads to God’s discipline (1 Cor. 11:30) |
| ***Leadership*** | Elders (Exod. 3:16, 18; 4:29, “”31; 12:21; Num. 11:16-17; Josh. 24:31; 1 Sam. 15:30; 2 Sam. 17:4, 15; 1 Kings 21:8, 11 and many other texts) | Elders (Acts 11:30; 14:23-24; 15:1-6; 16:4; 20:17-38; 21:17-26; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:14; 5:17-25; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:17) |
| ***Witness*** | “light for the Gentiles” (Isa. 49:3-6)  “kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6)  “holy nation” (Exod. 19:6) | “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14-16)  “holy…royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5, 9)  “holy nation” (1 Pet. 5:9) |

### More Contrasts Between Israel and the Church[[11]](#footnote-11)

The early church fathers almost unanimously taught that Christ will return to rule over Israel in a literal 1000 year millennium (Rev. 20:1-6; cf. Eschatology notes, 121-121b). However, since the 4th century AD many have taught that there is no future for national Israel due to its rejection of Christ so that Israel’s promises have been transferred to the church as “the new Israel.” Can such a teaching be found in Scripture? I believe it cannot for many reasons:

1. Israel and the Church have several differences in Scripture (see the chart on page 131).

2. Throughout Scripture the term “Israel” always refers to physical descendants of Jacob—it never refers to the church. To claim that it does is to argue from silence.

3. Luke contrasts natural Israel and Gentiles *after* the church is established (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19).

4. Paul distinguishes Israel from the church, showing that the church is not Israel. If they were the same, his distinctions would be meaningless.

God has not rejected Israel to replace the nation with the church

Rom. 11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

Some Jews are in the church, a separate group from Israel

Rom. 9:6 … For not all who descended from Israel [the nation] are Israel.

At present, Israel is mostly unsaved (and thus distinct from the saved Church)

Rom. 9:30-31 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles [believers in the Church], who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.

God is not finished with Israel

Rom. 11:11 Again I ask: Did they [Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

Israel’s hardening is both partial and temporary as the future nation will be saved

Rom. 11:25-27 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.’

Israel is spoken of as separate from the Church

1 Cor. 10:32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

Israel and the Church are separate but fellow-heirs of God’s promises

Eph. 3:6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

5. John notes that Jews from all twelve tribes (Rev. 7:1-8) will witness for Christ in the future (Rev. 14:1-5). This group is distinct from believing Gentiles (Rev. 7:9).

6. Matthew also acknowledged a future for Israel in Christ’s promise that the nation will again see Him (Matt. 19:28; 23:39).

7. Early Church Fathers before AD 325 believed in the 6000 six year theory (cf. Eschatology, 112-15), dispensations, a premillennial return of Christ, and imminency (cf. Eschatology, p. 121 Crutchfield note). Therefore, dispensational features were noted very early in the church.

### Responses to Dispensational Problem Passages

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Passages Used to Equate Israel & the Church** | **Dispensational Responses** |
| The church is the “seed of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7; 4:31), which in the OT refers only to Israel. So isn’t the church the “new Israel”? | The church is the spiritual seed of Abraham, but this doesn’t mean it replaces the physical seed so that Israel is done away with permanently (cf. Rom. 11:1-2, 11, 15, 25; see preceding page). |
| “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15-16). | Paul doesn’t say that all who follow the rule (i.e., Christians) are the “true Israel.” He had just attacked the Jewish legalists, so it makes better sense that he announced blessing on Jews who had forsaken legalism to truly follow Christ. |
| The church is called the “true circumcision” (Phil. 3:3). | The comparison is not between the church and Israel but between the church and legalistic Jews. |
| Jesus told Pilate His kingdom “is not of this world” but “from another place” (John 18:36). | Christ did not comment on the place of His kingdom. He said the source of His kingdom was heaven. He did not say that this kingdom could not eventually be established on earth. |
| “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “Here it is,” or “There it is,” because the kingdom of God is within you’” (Luke 17:20-21). Isn’t this amillennialism? | The “within you” (NIV) cannot refer to a spiritual rather than literal kingdom. Christ spoke this to unbelieving Pharisees who rejected Him as Messiah, so the kingdom was not within them! A better translation is “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (the King stood right before them). “All they needed to do was acknowledge that He is indeed the Messiah who could bring in the kingdom—and then the kingdom would come” (Martin, “Luke,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 2:249). |
| Amos 9:11-12 says that the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled, and James quoted this prophecy to say that the rebuilt house of David is the church which was used to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15:15-18). | James did not say that Amos was fulfilled in the church, but only that Gentile inclusion (“the remnant of men”) agreed with the OT prophets. Also, the “return” (Acts 15:16) is used of a literal return (cf. Acts 5:22) which precedes the fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy. This means Christ’s return will precede the re-establishment of David’s throne. Christ’s present ministry at the Father’s right hand (Rom. 8:34) is not elsewhere in the NT associated with the Davidic throne— only when He returns will He occupy this throne (Matt. 19:28; Toussaint, “Acts,” *BKC*, 2:394). |
| Jer. 31:31-34 refers to Israel’s new covenant, which the NT applies to the church (Heb. 8), thus equating Israel with the church. | Not all of Jeremiah’s descriptions are applied (e.g., everyone does not know the Lord), so the church has only a preliminary fulfillment of this prophecy. |

## New Covenant

### Definitions

#### My Definition: God’s unconditional amplification of the *blessing* promise in the Abrahamic Covenant in which Israel and Judah will experience national and spiritual redemption but in which the church also experiences partial present blessings.

#### Alternate (Amillennial) Definition: The blessing of the Spirit in the present age given to each believer as the “seed of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7, 16, 29; 4:31) since God has rejected national Israel and replaced it with the church.

### Key Passage: Jer. 31:31-34

### Provisions:

#### Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:33 with Ezek. 36:27)

#### New nature, heart, and mind (Jer. 31:33; Isa. 59:21)

#### No need for evangelism (Jer. 31:34a)

#### Forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34b)

### Unconditional Nature

#### Eternal (Jer. 31:36, 40; 32:40; 50:5; Isa. 61:2, 8-9; 24:5; Ezek. 37:26)

#### Amplification of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is unconditional

#### Unqualified “I will” statements of God (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 16:60-62)

### Time of Fulfillment (cf. chart on next page)

#### Partial fulfillment in the present church age: Three premillennial views have been given on how to correlate Jeremiah 31:31ff. with the NT passages (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; 9:15).

##### Only one New Covenant for Israel (Darby)

##### Two New Covenants: one for Israel and one for the church (Chafer)

##### One New Covenant with a two-fold application: to the church now and to Israel in the future (Scofield and others)

#### Complete fulfillment after return of Christ

#### Note that the time of fulfillment began as soon as the old covenant (Mosaic) was no longer in force. On the night before Christ’s death, He instituted the new covenant in his blood, knowing full well that the next day the old covenant would be abolished (cf. Rom. 7).

##### In fact, only the Mosaic Covenant is noted to be the “old covenant” in Scripture. Grudem emphasizes this point (p. 521, emphases his):

What then is the “old covenant” in contrast with the “new covenant” in Christ? *It is not the whole of the Old Testament*, because the covenants with Abraham and David are never called “old” in the New Testament. Rather, *only the covenant under Moses*, the covenant made at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19-24) is called the “old covenant” (2 Cor. 3:14; cf. Heb. 8:6, 13), to be replaced by the “new covenant” in Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24).

##### No Scripture refers to the Abrahamic, Palestinian, or Davidic Covenants as “the old covenant” since they are still in effect. God has not yet finished fulfilling promises made to His people Israel.

### Signs of the Covenants

One cannot fully understand the nature of the church apart from seeing the covenant concepts clearly within the Word of God. In this regard, God has made several covenants with man throughout the ages. With several of them he has attached a sign or memorial as reminders of his and/or our responsibilities to keep these covenants.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Covenant* | *Definition* | *Promise* | *Fulfillment* | *Sign* |
| **Noahic** | **Unconditional promise not to flood the earth again** | **Gen. 9:12-17** | **No more sea**  **(Rev. 21:1)** | **Rainbow**  **(Gen. 9:12-17)** |
| **Abrahamic** | **Promise to provide Israel a land, rule, and spiritual blessing** | **Gen. 12:1-3; 15:13-18** | **Continues at present (Gal. 3:17) but Israel still has a future (see Rom. 11:25-27)** | **Circumcision**  **(Gen. 17:11)** |
| **Mosaic** | **Conditional stipulations for blessing on Israel** | **Exod. 19—31; Deut. 28** | **Death of Christ (Rom. 7:4-6)** | **Sabbath**  **(Exod. 31:13)** |
| **Palestinian** | **Promise of physical land from the Wadi of Egypt to the River Euphrates** | **Deut. 30:1-10** | **Land blessed (Amos 9:13-15)** | **No sign**  **(that I know of)** |
| **Davidic** | **Promise of eternal,**  **political rule of a descendant of David** | **2 Sam. 7:12-17** | **Rule renewed (Amos 9:11-12)** | **Christ seated at the Father’s right hand**  **(Acts 2:34-36)** |
| **New** | **Promise of spiritual indwelling of the Spirit (“law written on hearts”), forgiveness, and total evangelization of Israel** | **Jer. 31:31-34** | **Paul & the Apostles (2 Cor. 3–4)**  **All Israel saved (Rom. 11:26-27)** | **Cup of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25)** |

### Contrasting the Old and New Covenants (2 Cor. 3–4)

God has included the church in the new covenant that he promised to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34 is applied to the church in Hebrews 8:8; 9:15). One way to see the blessing of this truth is to see Paul’s contrasts of this new covenant with the old one:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Old Covenant** | **New Covenant** |
| **initiated by Moses (3:8)** | **initiated by Christ (3:4)** |
| **of the letter (3:6a)** | **of the Spirit (3:6a, 18b)** |
| **kills (3:6b, 7a)** | **gives life (3:6b)** |
| **engraved on stone (3:3b, 7a)** | **engraved on hearts (3:3b; Jer. 31:33)** |
| **glorious (3:7a)** | **more glorious (3:8, 10)** |
| **glory faded (3:7b, 11a, 13b)** | **glory ever-increases (3:11b, 18)** |
| **condemns men (3:9a)** | **brings righteousness (3:9b)** |
| **deception (3:13)** | **boldness (3:12)** |
| **veiled face of Moses (3:13b)** | **unveiled faces (3:13a, 18a)** |
| **veiled minds (3:14a)** | **unveiled minds (3:14b; 4:3-6)** |
| **veiled hearts (3:15)** | **unveiled hearts (3:16)** |
| **dullness (3:14a)** | **freedom (3:17)** |
| **Moses reflected God’s glory** | **all believers reflect Christ’s glory (3:17)** |
| **non-transforming (3:7)** | **transforming (3:18)** |
| **lack of zeal (3:13)** | **confidence, steadfastness (3:4-5; 4:1)** |
| **deception (3:13)** | **sincerity (4:2)** |

### Views on the New Covenant

Issue: How can the OT and NT data on the New Covenant be reconciled? Jeremiah 31 declares it is for Israel and Judah but the NT (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8; 9:15) apply it to the church. Is there actually *no* New Covenant, is it only for *Israel* or only for the *church*, or are there *two* New Covenants, or does the *church participate* in some of its aspects while awaiting the final fulfillment of the covenant? This study takes the last view, as do most modern premillennialists and other scholars. ( “OC” and “NC” below are the Old Covenant and New Covenant, respectively.)

**View Explanation School/Scholars Problems**

Restated No New Critical 1. OC/NC distinctions in text ignored

Mosaic Covenant -Couturier 2. OC = conditional, NC = unconditional

-Duhm 3. OC = temporal, NC = eternal

-Schmidt 4. OC = external, NC = internal

-Potter 5. OC = no enabling, NC = enabling

6. NC = peace, prosperity, sanctuary, Spirit (parallel passages)

Church No Israel Amillennial/ 1. Ignores OT data by equating

Alone Participation Postmillennial Israel and the Church

-Allis 2. NC introduced ≠ fulfilled to Israel

-Cox 3. Present need to know YHWH

-Smick (need for Great Commission)

-Boettner 4. AD 70 Jerusalem vs. Jer. 31:40

Israel No Church Misc/Classical 1. Ignores NT data

Alone Participation Dispensational -Christ's Last Supper words

-Darby -Paul's statements

-Thompson -Hebrews application to Church

-von Rad 2. Ignores present work of Spirit

Two NC for Israel Early 1900s 1. Same terminology for OT & NT NCs

New NC for Church Dispensational 2. Israel/Church distinction too sharp

Covenants -Chafer 3. Basis of forgiveness the same

-Walvoord (old) 4. If 2 NCs then no OC for Church

-Ryrie (old) 5. Church doesn’t possess Israel's

promises

Church Primarily Misc/Present Support:

Partici- for Israel Dispensational 1. Primary fulfillment future—Rom 11

pation Secondarily -Keil 2. Deals with both OT & NT data

for Church -Lemke 3. Forgiveness/Spirit = blessings now

-Bright 4. NC has new law

-Scofield 5. Rebuttals to above views

-Walvoord (DTS)

-Ryrie (DTS)

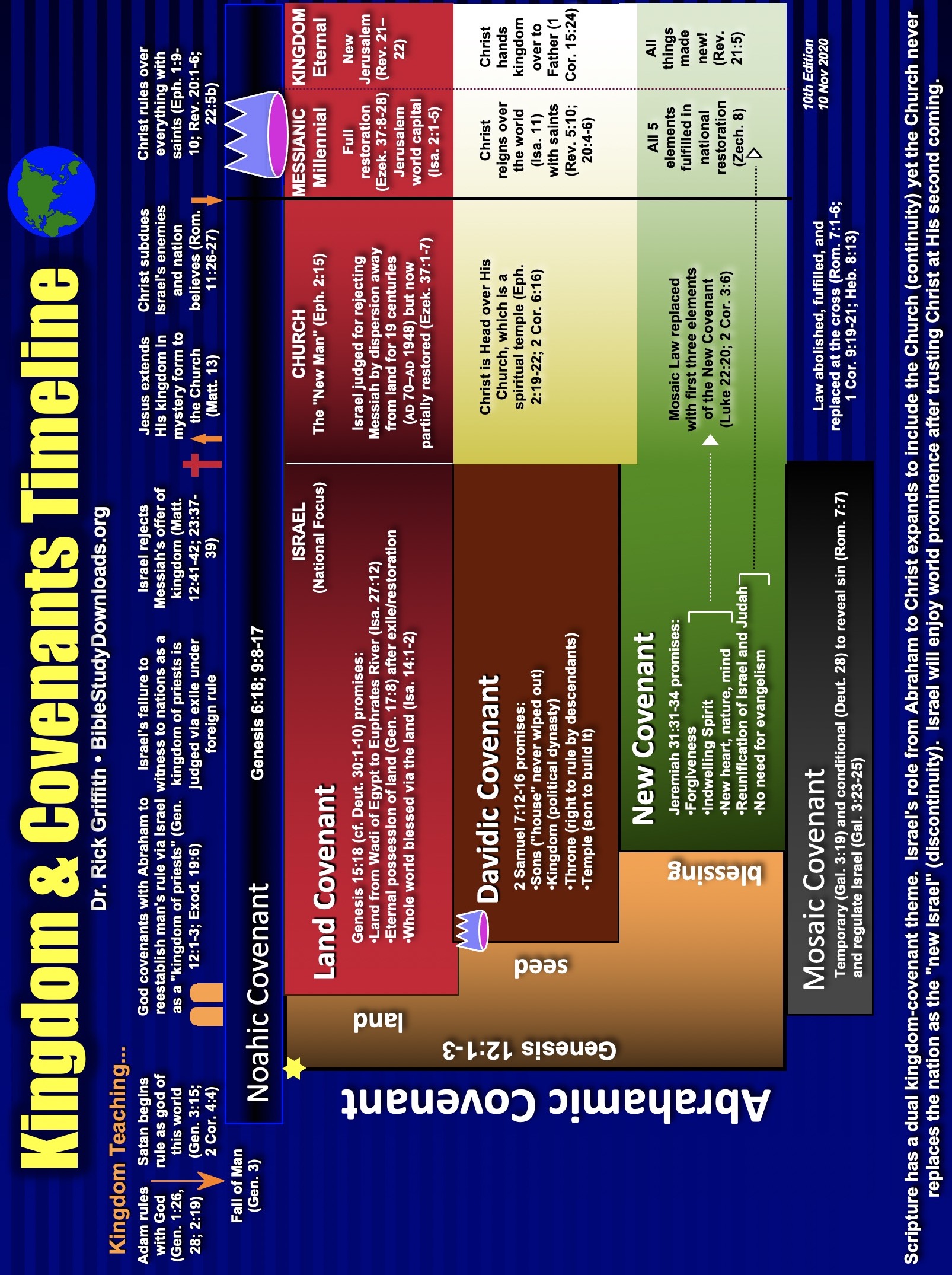
-Archer (TEDS)

-Kaiser (TEDS)

-Feinberg (Talbot)

-Thiessen (Talbot)

**Kingdom & Covenants Timeline**



# Church Leadership

## Small Group Exercise

### Pastoral vs. Secular Leadership

Paste in arrows cartoon

How should your leadership as a pastor differ from leadership in the so-called secular arena (businessmen, doctors, educators, lawyers, etc.)? Contrast these in the chart below. (Do this exercise even if you are not a pastor—address it for your particular type of church ministry.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Secular Leadership** |  | **Pastoral Leadership** |
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### The Key Principle

What leadership principle has helped you most in leading God’s people? Share this in your group. Do others in your group agree with you? Write down their principles too.

## What Should Leaders Aim for?

### Church Growth

#### Church growth has come to mean numerical growth *only*, despite the fact that this is not a NT emphasis.

#### The NT records 3000 coming to Christ and 2000 added to them in the early chapters of Acts (2:41; 4:4), but after this the size of churches are never noted on Paul’s journeys or regarding churches that received NT letters. His concern was quality growth over quantity growth (but not to exclude numerical growth).

#### In like manner, people should care less about their physical height than they care about their overall health.

#### But what makes a *church* healthy? How can we tell if a body of believers is meeting the biblical criteria for inner growth rather than making outward growth the focus?

### Scriptural Marks of a Healthy Church[[12]](#footnote-12)

#### Healthy churches are measured in spiritual rather than numerical terms.

#### Healthy churches follow biblical rather than cultural patterns of ministry.

#### Healthy churches are based on theological rather than sociological foundations.

#### Healthy churches focus on a ministry model rather than a marketing model.

#### Healthy churches adopt scriptural rather than secular models of leadership.

## Biblical Leadership Principles

### Personal Leadership

#### Make sure that you follow God’s priorities as a leader—be more concerned that you are biblical than you are culturally relevant.

#### Adapt your leadership style based on whether you minister in a start-up situation with immature believers (requiring direct leadership) or more mature believers (requiring a consultative leadership style).

#### Leading like Jesus involves serving people (Mark 10:45). In all you do, ask, “Is this serving the needs of people?” Humility is more important than leadership. Without humility you will be more of an administrator than a shepherd.

### Selecting Leaders

#### Give priority to the Word and prayer by delegating as many other matters to others as possible (Acts 6:1-7). Make shepherding priority over paperwork and planning. (Shun ever being called the CEO of the church!)

#### Maintaining spiritual qualifications should take precedence over academic or ability concerns. Make sure you do a self-study of the qualities in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Consult here Gene Getz, *The Measure of a Man* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1974). It has study projects for each character quality.

#### Always lead as part of a team. Paul always had a Timothy, elders always functioned in a group, and the lone ranger leader will soon burn out. He cannot think up all the best ideas on his own, nor should he function without accountability.

### Other Principles

## Leadership Structure in the Old Testament

### Is there a pattern?

The Issue: Does the Bible have any *consistent leadership structure* for Israel and the Church? This question will best be clarified by studying the OT first.

### The Single Leader Model

Did God speak through these national leaders without a corollary group to which they were accountable?

#### Moses (Exodus 18–19)

#### Joshua

#### The Judge (Deliverer)

#### The High Priest

#### The King

#### The Governor

### The Elders of Israel

#### *Rationale:* Our study of OT leadership will focus primarily on the elders of Israel. Why?

##### We have no parallel to the OT prophets, priests and kings today except Jesus Christ (who fills all three roles), so a study of these three offices will not be as relevant to contemporary leadership issues.

##### The elders of Israel are the only leaders prominent in each period of OT history. Therefore, chronologically speaking, they provide the clearest model of the normal pattern of OT leadership throughout Israel’s history.

#### *Word Search:* My computer word search for “elder” and “elders” in the NIV Bible reveals 191 occurrences, of which 128 are in the Old Testament. Study your assigned portion by marking up your section with your observations. Feel free to look up any verses in context in your Bible. Here are these 128 verses in order:

##### Exod. 3:16 “Go, assemble the ***elders*** of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers —the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.

##### Exod. 3:18 “The ***elders*** of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the ***elders*** are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.’

##### Exod. 4:29 Moses and Aaron brought together all the ***elders*** of the Israelites,

##### Exod. 12:21 Then Moses summoned all the ***elders*** of Israel and said to them, “Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb.

##### Exod. 17:5 The LORD answered Moses, “Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the ***elders*** of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

##### Exod. 17:6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the ***elders*** of Israel.

##### Exod. 18:12 Then Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the ***elders*** of Israel to eat bread with Moses’ father-in-law in the presence of God.

##### Exod. 19:7 So Moses went back and summoned the ***elders*** of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak.

##### Exod. 24:1 Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the ***elders*** of Israel. You are to worship at a distance,

##### Exod. 24:9 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy ***elders*** of Israel went up

##### Exod. 24:14 He said to the ***elders***, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them.”

##### Lev. 4:15 The ***elders*** of the community are to lay their hands on the bull’s head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD.

##### Lev. 9:1 On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the ***elders*** of Israel.

##### Num. 11:16 The LORD said to Moses: “Bring me seventy of Israel’s ***elders*** who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you.

##### Num. 11:24 So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their ***elders*** and had them stand around the Tent.

##### Num. 11:25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy ***elders***. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again.

##### Num. 11:26 However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the ***elders***, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp.

##### Num. 11:30 Then Moses and the ***elders*** of Israel returned to the camp.

##### Num. 16:25 Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the ***elders*** of Israel followed him.

##### Num. 22:4 The Moabites said to the ***elders*** of Midian, “This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.” So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time,

##### Num. 22:7 The ***elders*** of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.

##### Deut. 5:23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your ***elders*** came to me.

##### Deut. 19:12 the ***elders*** of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die.

##### Deut. 21:2 your ***elders*** and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the neighboring towns.

##### Deut. 21:3 Then the ***elders*** of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked and has never worn a yoke

##### Deut. 21:6 Then all the ***elders*** of the town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley,

##### Deut. 21:19 his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the ***elders*** at the gate of his town.

##### Deut. 21:20 They shall say to the ***elders***, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.”

##### Deut. 22:15 then the girl’s father and mother shall bring proof that she was a virgin to the town ***elders*** at the gate.

##### Deut. 22:16 The girl’s father will say to the ***elders***, “I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her.

##### Deut. 22:17 Now he has slandered her and said, ‘I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.’ But here is the proof of my daughter’s virginity.” Then her parents shall display the cloth before the ***elders*** of the town,

##### Deut. 22:18 and the ***elders*** shall take the man and punish him.

##### Deut. 25:7 However, if a man does not want to marry his brother’s wife, she shall go to the ***elders*** at the town gate and say, “My husband’s brother refuses to carry on his brother’s name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.”

##### Deut. 25:8 Then the ***elders*** of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, “I do not want to marry her,”

##### Deut. 25:9 his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the ***elders***, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.”

##### Deut. 27:1 Moses and the ***elders*** of Israel commanded the people: “Keep all these commands that I give you today.

##### Deut. 29:10 All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God —your leaders and chief men, your ***elders*** and officials, and all the other men of Israel,

##### Deut. 31:9 So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the ***elders*** of Israel.

##### Deut. 31:28 Assemble before me all the ***elders*** of your tribes and all your officials, so that I can speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to testify against them.

##### Deut. 32:7 Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your ***elders***, and they will explain to you.

##### Josh. 7:6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the LORD, remaining there till evening. The ***elders*** of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads.

##### Josh. 8:33 All Israel… with their ***elders***, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it —the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel.

##### Josh. 9:11 And our ***elders*** and all those living in our country said to us, ‘Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, “We are your servants; make a treaty with us.” ’

##### Josh. 20:4 “When he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case before the ***elders*** of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them.

##### Josh. 23:2 summoned all Israel —their ***elders***, leaders, judges and officials —and said to them: “I am old and well advanced in years.

##### Josh. 24:1 Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the ***elders***, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

##### Josh. 24:31 Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the ***elders*** who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

##### Judg. 2:7 The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the ***elders*** who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel.

##### Judg. 8:14 He caught a young man of Succoth and questioned him, and the young man wrote down for him the names of the seventy-seven officials of Succoth, the ***elders*** of the town.

##### Judg. 8:16 He took the ***elders*** of the town and taught the men of Succoth a lesson by punishing them with desert thorns and briers.

##### Judg. 11:5 the ***elders*** of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob.

##### Judg. 11:8 The ***elders*** of Gilead said to him, “Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be our head over all who live in Gilead.”

##### Judg. 11:10 The ***elders*** of Gilead replied, “The LORD is our witness; we will certainly do as you say.”

##### Judg. 11:11 So Jephthah went with the ***elders*** of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander over them. And he repeated all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

##### Judg. 21:16 And the ***elders*** of the assembly said, “With the women of Benjamin destroyed, how shall we provide wives for the men who are left?

##### Ruth 4:2 Boaz took ten of the ***elders*** of the town and said, “Sit here,” and they did so.

##### Ruth 4:4 I thought I should bring the matter to your attention and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the ***elders*** of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.” I will redeem it,” he said.

##### Ruth 4:9 Then Boaz announced to the ***elders*** and all the people, “Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon.

##### Ruth 4:11 Then the ***elders*** and all those at the gate said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you have standing in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

##### 1 Sam. 4:3 When the soldiers returned to camp, the ***elders*** of Israel asked, “Why did the LORD bring defeat upon us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Shiloh, so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies.”

##### 1 Sam. 8:4 So all the ***elders*** of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah.

##### 1 Sam. 11:3 The ***elders*** of Jabesh said to him, “Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you.”

##### 1 Sam. 15:30 Saul replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the ***elders*** of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God.”

##### 1 Sam. 16:4 Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the ***elders*** of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

##### 1 Sam. 30:26 When David arrived in Ziklag, he sent some of the plunder to the ***elders*** of Judah, who were his friends, saying, “Here is a present for you from the plunder of the LORD’s enemies.”

##### 2 Sam. 3:17 Abner conferred with the ***elders*** of Israel and said, “For some time you have wanted to make David your king.

##### 2 Sam. 5:3 When all the ***elders*** of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

##### 2 Sam. 12:17 The ***elders*** of his household stood beside him to get him up from the ground, but he refused, and he would not eat any food with them.

##### 2 Sam. 17:4 This plan seemed good to Absalom and to all the ***elders*** of Israel.

##### 2 Sam. 17:15 Hushai told Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, “Ahithophel has advised Absalom and the ***elders*** of Israel to do such and such, but I have advised them to do so and so.

##### 2 Sam. 19:11 King David sent this message to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests: “Ask the ***elders*** of Judah, ‘Why should you be the last to bring the king back to his palace, since what is being said throughout Israel has reached the king at his quarters?

##### 1 Kings 8:1 Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the ***elders*** of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Zion, the City of David.

##### 1 Kings 8:3 When all the ***elders*** of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark,

##### 1 Kings 12:6 Then King Rehoboam consulted the ***elders*** who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

##### 1 Kings 12:8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice the ***elders*** gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him.

##### 1 Kings 12:13 The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the ***elders***,

##### 1 Kings 20:7 The king of Israel summoned all the ***elders*** of the land and said to them, “See how this man is looking for trouble! When he sent for my wives and my children, my silver and my gold, I did not refuse him.”

##### 1 Kings 20:8 The ***elders*** and the people all answered, “Don’t listen to him or agree to his demands.”

##### 1 Kings 21:8 So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the ***elders*** and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city with him.

##### 1 Kings 21:11 So the ***elders*** and nobles who lived in Naboth’s city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them.

##### 2 Kings 6:32 Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the ***elders*** were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the ***elders***, “Don’t you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it shut against him. Is not the sound of his master’s footsteps behind him?”

##### 2 Kings 10:1 Now there were in Samaria seventy sons of the house of Ahab. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria: to the officials of Jezreel, to the ***elders*** and to the guardians of Ahab’s children. He said,

##### 2 Kings 10:5 So the palace administrator, the city governor, the ***elders*** and the guardians sent this message to Jehu: “We are your servants and we will do anything you say. We will not appoint anyone as king; you do whatever you think best.”

##### 2 Kings 23:1 Then the king called together all the ***elders*** of Judah and Jerusalem.

##### 1 Chron. 11:3 When all the ***elders*** of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, he made a compact with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel, as the LORD had promised through Samuel.

##### 1 Chron. 15:25 So David and the ***elders*** of Israel and the commanders of units of a thousand went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom, with rejoicing.

##### 1 Chron. 21:16 David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the ***elders***, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown.

##### 2 Chron. 5:2 Then Solomon summoned to Jerusalem the ***elders*** of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Zion, the City of David.

##### 2 Chron. 5:4 When all the ***elders*** of Israel had arrived, the Levites took up the ark,

##### 2 Chron. 10:6 Then King Rehoboam consulted the ***elders*** who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. “How would you advise me to answer these people?” he asked.

##### 2 Chron. 10:8 But Rehoboam rejected the advice the ***elders*** gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him.

##### 2 Chron. 10:13 The king answered them harshly. Rejecting the advice of the ***elders***,

##### 2 Chron. 34:29 Then the king called together all the ***elders*** of Judah and Jerusalem.

##### Ezra 5:5 But the eye of their God was watching over the ***elders*** of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.

##### Ezra 5:9 We questioned the ***elders*** and asked them, “Who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?”

##### Ezra 6:7 Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish ***elders*** rebuild this house of God on its site.

##### Ezra 6:8 Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these ***elders*** of the Jews in the construction of this house of God: The expenses of these men are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop.

##### Ezra 6:14 So the ***elders*** of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

##### Ezra 10:8 Anyone who failed to appear within three days would forfeit all his property, in accordance with the decision of the officials and ***elders***, and would himself be expelled from the assembly of the exiles.

##### Ezra 10:14 Let our officials act for the whole assembly. Then let everyone in our towns who has married a foreign woman come at a set time, along with the ***elders*** and judges of each town, until the fierce anger of our God in this matter is turned away from us.”

##### Job 12:20 He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of ***elders***.

##### Ps. 105:22 to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his ***elders*** wisdom.

##### Ps. 107:32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the ***elders.***

##### Ps. 119:100 I have more understanding than the ***elders***, for I obey your precepts.

##### Prov. 31:23 Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the ***elders*** of the land.

##### Isa. 3:2 the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and ***elder***,

##### Isa. 3:14 The LORD enters into judgment against the ***elders*** and leaders of his people: It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses.

##### Isa. 9:15 the ***elders*** and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.

##### Isa. 24:23 The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its ***elders***, gloriously.

##### Jer. 19:1 This is what the LORD says: “Go and buy a clay jar from a potter. Take along some of the ***elders*** of the people and of the priests

##### Jer. 26:17 Some of the ***elders*** of the land stepped forward and said to the entire assembly of people,

##### Jer. 29:1 This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

##### Lam. 1:19 “I called to my allies but they betrayed me. My priests and my ***elders*** perished in the city while they searched for food to keep themselves alive.

##### Lam. 2:10 The ***elders*** of the Daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

##### Lam. 4:16 The LORD himself has scattered them; he no longer watches over them. The priests are shown no honor, the ***elders*** no favor.

##### Lam. 5:12 Princes have been hung up by their hands; ***elders*** are shown no respect.

##### Lam. 5:14 The ***elders*** are gone from the city gate; the young men have stopped their music.

##### Ezek. 7:26 Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumor upon rumor. They will try to get a vision from the prophet; the teaching of the law by the priest will be lost, as will the counsel of the ***elders***.

##### Ezek. 8:1 In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and the ***elders*** of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign LORD came upon me there.

##### Ezek. 8:11 In front of them stood seventy ***elders*** of the house of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising.

##### Ezek. 8:12 He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the ***elders*** of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, ‘The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.’ “

##### Ezek. 9:6 Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the ***elders*** who were in front of the temple.

##### Ezek. 14:1 Some of the ***elders*** of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me.

##### Ezek. 20:1 In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the ***elders*** of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and they sat down in front of me.

##### Ezek. 20:3 “Son of man, speak to the ***elders*** of Israel and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will not let you inquire of me, declares the Sovereign LORD.’

##### Joel 1:2 Hear this, you ***elders***; listen, all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your forefathers?

##### Joel 1:14 Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the ***elders*** and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.

##### Joel 2:16 Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the ***elders***, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.

#### OT Conclusions: What observations about the elders of Israel come from studying these OT verses?

##### Elders are found throughout the nation’s history.

###### We first see them during Israel’s slavery in Egypt (Exod. 3:16)

###### They lead during the exile in Babylon (Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1),

###### They led even during the postexilic period when Judah had no king (Ezra 10:8, 14). Their title was the “elders of the Jews” (Ezra 5:5; 6:7-8, 14).

##### Elders were prominent even when God spoke revelation through a single man such as Moses (Exod. 3:16, 18; 4:29, etc.) or a prophet like Elijah (2 Kings 6:32).

##### There was always a plurality of elders in the OT—only once does the word appear in the singular (“elder” in Isa. 3:2).

###### There were more than 70 elders of the nation Israel (Exod. 24:1, 9; Num. 11:16) and the town of Succoth itself had 77 elders (Judg. 8:14).

###### Never do we find a linear authority from king to city administrator to employees. Each city was led by a group of men called elders.

##### Elders led at various levels:

###### Elders led the whole nation (called “elders of Israel” Exod. 24:9; 1 Sam. 4:3-4; 2 Sam. 3:17; etc.). Their leadership was in the following ways…

by going to Pharaoh with Moses (Exod. 3:18),

by hearing God’s words before the people did (Exod. 19:7; Deut. 31:28),

by seeing God half-way up Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:9-10),

by acknowledging responsibility for the nation’s sins (Lev. 4:15; Judg. 21:16),

by helping ordain the priests into their ministry (Lev. 9:1),

by acting officially on behalf of the people (Deut. 29:10; 31:9; Josh. 8:33; 24:1; Isa. 3:14; 9:15; Jer. 19:1; Joel 1:2, 14; 2:16),

by leading in the worship of Israel (1 Chron. 15:25).

###### Elders ruled over a portion of the kingdom.

Elders ruled over the southern nation of Judah before the exile (1 Sam. 30:26; 2. 19:11) and after the return from exile (the title “elders of Israel” seems equivalent to “elders of Judah” in the postexilic time, Ezek. 8:1 with 14:1).

Elders ruled the northern nation of Israel at Samaria (1 Kings 20:7).

Elders ruled a single town (Deut. 21:2-20; e.g., Succoth Judg. 8:14; Gilead Judg. 8:14; Jabesh 1 Sam. 11:3; Bethlehem 1 Sam. 16:4). Apparently every town had elders (Ezra 10:14).

###### Often they acted as judges in civil suits, especially at the city gate (Deut. 22:15-18; 25:7-9; Josh. 20:4; Ruth 4:2-11) in order to…[[13]](#footnote-13)

bring murderers to justice (Deut. 19:12).

protect innocent manslayers from revenge (Josh. 20:4).

protect the land from unsolved murders (Deut. 21:2-4, 6).

judge cases involving rebellious sons (Deut. 21:19-20).

judge a husband’s case against a supposed non-virgin wife (Deut. 22:13).

hear a widow’s case against her brother-in-law in levirate marriages (Deut. 25:7-9).

###### Once elders offered rule to an individual (Jephthah) so that he could lead their area of Gilead (Judg. 11:8, 11).

###### Elders even ruled over a single household—David’s (2 Sam. 12:17).

##### Elders ruled other nations, such as Midian (Num. 22:4), Moab (Num. 22:7), and Gibeon (Josh. 9:11).

##### Once Israel’s elders prophesied (Num. 11:25-26).

##### Elders were commanded to teach the people God’s laws every seven years (Deut. 27:1-8; 31:9-10), which they did under Josiah (2 Kings 23:1-2).

##### Elders were respected for their wisdom (Ps. 107:32; Prov. 31:23; Lam. 4:16; 5:12).

##### Elders counseled kings in their ruling (1 Kings 12:6-8, 13; 20:7-8; Jer. 26:17) and anointed kings to power (1 Chron. 11:3).

###### Kings in the early monarchy depended much on their cooperation to rule successfully (1 Sam. 15:30), including making military decisions (2 Kings 10:1, 5).

###### However, elders also submitted to the king’s demands (1 Kings 21:11; 2 Chron. 34:29).

##### Elders submitted to prophets’ instructions (Elijah in 2 Kings 6:32; Ezekiel in Ezek. 14:1).

##### Elders ruled alongside other administrators: a palace administrator, the city governor, and officials (2 Kings 10:1, 5). Their decision was especially binding in postexilic times (Ezra 10:8, 14).

##### OT elders often failed to lead the people biblically.

###### They superstitiously counseled the people to bring the ark into battle (1 Sam. 4:3).

###### They rejected God’s rule for Saul’s (1 Sam. 8:4).

###### They disbelieved in God’s ability to protect Jabesh-Gilead from their enemies (1 Sam. 11).

###### They broke covenant with David to follow his renegade son Absalom (2 Sam. 17:4, 15).

###### They assisted Jezebel in killing Naboth (1 Kings 21:8, 11; cf. Isa. 3:14-15).

###### They failed to teach God’s people to the extent that God’s law book (Deuteronomy?) was even lost for years until the reign of Josiah (2 Kings 23).

###### They participated in false worship so that God judged them for their idolatry (Ezek. 8:11-12; 9:6) by not even letting them inquire of the LORD (Ezek. 20:1-3).

###### They pretended to want to hear God’s word but were rebuked (Ezek. 14:3; 20:1, 3).

###### They were judged with starvation in their own city (Lam. 1:19; 2:10), having lost their respect (Lam. 4:16; 5:12) and role as administrators (Lam. 5:14).

##### Elders will rule over Israel in the future millennial reign of Christ (Isa. 24:23).

##### Unfortunately, the OT gives no explicit instructions on who they were or how to select them. Yet the term itself implies that each group of elders was composed of older, mature men.

#### Summary

Elders were of utmost importance in OT times as one Israel’s oldest and most fundamental institutions. This is seen in the numerous references to them as official community leaders. They always functioned as a group rather than individually. Also, there is no evidence for a head elder or senior elder who rules over the entire council. This form existed even in the most extreme circumstances (exile) and always had an honored role before the community. They were always males who had the task to protect, govern, and administrate justice for they were men of counsel and wisdom. Above all, they were responsible for the people’s spiritual welfare since (along with the Levites) they taught them God’s statutes. Unfortunately, they failed in many of these tasks.

## Intertestamental & Pre-Church Leadership Structure

### Context:

#### The intertestamental period technically refers to the time between Malachi (425 BC) and Jesus Christ (5 BC). However, since a new leadership structure (the Church) did not appear until the beginning of the church at Pentecost, we will study the leadership of Israel until AD 33 as a single unit.

#### Although Israel returned to their ancient homeland after the exile (586-538 BC), pagan kings still ruled over the nation. (Even to this day Israel’s monarchy has not been reestablished.) So how were the people led during this time? They followed the same pattern that they had used since the time of Moses nearly a thousand years earlier—a council of elders.

### Rise of the Synagogue

#### Name: The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem during the exile gave rise to a new institution called the synagogue. The Greek *syn* “together” with *agoge* “way of life, conduct” has the idea of bringing together for a common way of life (BAGD 14) and literally refers to a “gathering-place” or “place where something collects” (BAGD 782).

#### Definition: the center of Jewish religious education in which Jews gathered on Sabbaths for worship, prayer, and instruction from the Old Testament.

#### Origin: During the Jewish exile in Babylon six centuries before Christ (605-538 BC) the first synagogues were established—probably to teach Hebrew children to maintain their distinct (e.g., monotheistic) religion amidst pagan (polytheistic) surroundings.

#### Diversity: No typical synagogue existed. Since only ten Jewish men were required to establish one, this ease of “synagogue planting” led to great variety. Synagogues had differing architecture, political views, and congregations (e.g., the Synagogue of the Libertines or Freedman in Acts 6:9, found in the City of David).

#### Leadership: Three types of leaders were common:

##### *Elders*: Ten were required to begin the synagogue and it is presumed that they had a continuing influence.

##### *Ruler of the synagogue*: This general overseer maintained order in the services by assigning men to read the Scripture, pray, or speak (Acts 13:15). A synagogue ruler objected to Christ’s healing on the Sabbath (Luke 13:14), probably because it caused a disturbance! The ruler Crispus in Corinth believed in Christ (Acts 18:8; cf. Luke 8:41).

##### *Attendant of the synagogue*: He was the “religious professional” who received a salary for taking care of the scrolls (Luke 4:20), teaching the children, blowing the trumpet to start and end the Sabbath, presiding over funerals and mourning feasts, and administering punishments—even beatings (Mark 13:9). He often lived at the synagogue and sometimes was not godly.

##### Pharisees yielded an influence in the synagogues but do not seem to have held an official position.

## Leadership Structure in the New Testament

### Elders

#### NT Texts on Elders

##### Elders of Israel (32 NT references)

###### Matt. 15:2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the ***elders***? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”

###### Matt. 16:21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the ***elders***, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

###### Matt. 21:23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the ***elders*** of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

###### Matt. 26:3 Then the chief priests and the ***elders*** of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,

###### Matt. 26:47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the ***elders*** of the people.

###### Matt. 26:57 Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the ***elders*** had assembled.

###### Matt. 27:1 Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the ***elders*** of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death.

###### Matt. 27:3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the ***elders***.

###### Matt. 27:12 When he was accused by the chief priests and the ***elders***, he gave no answer.

###### Matt. 27:20 But the chief priests and the ***elders*** persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

###### Matt. 27:41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the ***elders*** mocked him.

###### Matt. 28:12 When the chief priests had met with the ***elders*** and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,

###### Mark 7:3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the ***elders***.

###### Mark 7:5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the ***elders*** instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?”

###### Mark 8:31 He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the ***elders***, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

###### Mark 11:27 They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the ***elders*** came to him.

###### Mark 14:43 Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the ***elders***.

###### Mark 14:53 They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, ***elders*** and teachers of the law came together.

###### Mark 15:1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the ***elders***, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

###### Luke 7:3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some ***elders*** of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.

###### Luke 9:22 And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the ***elders***, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

###### Luke 20:1 One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the ***elders***, came up to him.

###### Luke 22:52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the ***elders***, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?

###### Luke 22:66 At daybreak the council of the ***elders*** of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them.

###### Acts 4:5 The next day the rulers, ***elders*** and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem.

###### Acts 4:8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and ***elders*** of the people!

###### Acts 4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and ***elders*** had said to them.

###### Acts 5:21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin —the full assembly of the ***elders*** of Israel —and sent to the jail for the apostles.

###### Acts 6:12 So they stirred up the people and the ***elders*** and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.

###### Acts 23:14 They went to the chief priests and ***elders*** and said, “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.

###### Acts 24:1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the ***elders*** and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

###### Acts 25:15 When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and ***elders*** of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

##### Church Elders (24 NT references)

###### Elders called “Elders” (17 times)::

Acts 11:30 This they did, sending their gift to the ***elders*** by Barnabas and Saul.

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.

Acts 15:2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and ***elders*** about this question.

Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and ***elders***, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

Acts 15:6 The apostles and ***elders*** met to consider this question.

Acts 15:22 Then the apostles and ***elders***, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

Acts 15:23 With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and ***elders***, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.

Acts 16:4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and ***elders*** in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the ***elders*** of the church.

Acts 21:18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the ***elders*** were present.

1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of ***elders*** laid their hands on you.

1 Tim. 5:17 The ***elders*** who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

1 Tim. 5:19 Do not entertain an accusation against an ***elder*** unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

Titus 1:5 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 1:6 An ***elder*** must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

James 5:14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the ***elders*** of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

1 Pet. 5:1 To the ***elders*** among you, I appeal as a fellow ***elder***, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed:

###### Elders as “Overseers” (6 times):

Acts 20:28 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.

Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the ***overseers*** and deacons:

1 Tim. 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an ***overseer***, he desires a noble task.

1 Tim. 3:2 Now the ***overseer*** must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Titus 1:7 Since an ***overseer*** is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless —not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

1 Pet. 5:2 Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as ***overseers*** —not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;

###### Elders as “Pastor-Teachers” (1 time):

Eph. 4:11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

Gene Getz believes that this reference in Ephesians 4 to pastor-teachers is an office of the first-century only where men ministered to the universal church.[[14]](#footnote-14) He argues this because this gift is grouped with apostles and prophets (revelational gifts limited to time prior to the completion of the NT) as well as evangelists. Since Philip is the only person called an evangelist (Acts 21:9) and he received revelation (Acts 8:29), Getz assumes that all evangelists also received direct revelation. Also, besides association with these other three gifts, Getz gives no evidence for limiting the pastor-teachers to the early church. He limits these four gifts to a period prior to elders and deacons being instituted, yet elders are appointed in AD 48 (Acts 14:23) while Ephesians was written in AD 61, which is supposedly prior to elders!

##### God as “Overseer” (1 NT reference):

###### 1 Pet. 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and ***Overseer*** of your souls.

###### In a sense, since ultimately God oversees the whole world, all local church elders actually are under-overseers or under-shepherds.

##### The Elderly Apostle John Referred to as “Elder” (2 NT references)

###### 2 John 1 The ***elder***, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth —and not I only, but also all who know the truth

###### 3 John 1 The ***elder***, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

##### Heavenly Elders (12 NT references)

###### Rev. 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four ***elders***. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

###### Rev. 4:10 the twenty-four ***elders*** fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

###### Rev. 5:5-6 Then one of the ***elders*** said to me, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the ***elders***. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

###### Rev. 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four ***elders*** fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

###### Rev. 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the ***elders***.

###### Rev. 5:14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the ***elders*** fell down and worshiped.

###### Rev. 7:11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the ***elders*** and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

###### Rev. 7:13 Then one of the ***elders*** asked me, “These in white robes —who are they, and where did they come from?”

###### Rev. 11:16 And the twenty-four ***elders***, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,

###### Rev. 14:3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the ***elders***. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

###### Rev. 19:4 The twenty-four ***elders*** and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: “Amen, Hallelujah!”

#### Elder Responsibilities

So far we have seen that biblical leadership by elders originated in Old Testament times and continued during intertestamental Judaism where ten elders were needed to begin a synagogue. Even in NT times the leaders at Jerusalem were still called elders (as was the aged Apostle John in his epistles). Still more, some angels in heaven during the future book of Revelation are referred to as elders!

The NT church followed this same biblical pattern as the apostles appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Sometimes “elders” were called “overseers” as the terms are used interchangeably (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). “Elder” denotes age and maturity whereas “overseer” speaks of the pastoral oversight required of men in this role. Further, “elder” was a term recognized by Jews due to the OT and synagogue background whereas “overseer” (or “bishop”) was a Greek title recognized immediately by Gentiles as denoting a commissioner who regulated a new colony or acquisition.[[15]](#footnote-15) “Synonyms for the world *bishop* might be overseer, curator, guardian, or superintendent.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

With this background it is now possible to answer this question: What do elders do? There are five characteristics of their leadership:[[17]](#footnote-17)

##### **Pastoral Leadership** (mostly a shepherd imagery)

*Elders primarily serve in a pastoral capacity, which includes the following…*

###### Elders teach the church (a shepherd feeds the flock in green pastures).

“Shepherd the flock” includes teaching the Word (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).

“Able to teach” is a basic elder requirement (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9b).

His foundation must be Scripture (Titus 1:9a).

The same ones who have charge over the church (presumably the highest office) are also to instruct (1 Thess. 5:12).

Paul modeled the teaching content as the full plan and purpose of God (Acts 20:20, 27).

The church should pay elders who work hard at preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17-18; cf. pastor-teachers in Eph. 4:11). For practical purposes, such elders could be called “pastor-teachers” (Eph. 4:11), though nothing in the term “pastor-teacher” denotes a paid position per se.

The Acts 6:1-7 principle is that the highest ruling body in the church must devote themselves to teaching and prayer—and delegate what is necessary to maintain these priorities.

In Acts 6, apostles filled this highest role. However, the Jerusalem church also had elders (Acts 11:30; 15:4).

As the apostles died out and as leaders were selected for other churches, elders filled this role (Acts 14:23).

ELDERS

Word & Prayer

Some Administration

APOSTLES

Word & Prayer

Some Administration

“THE 7”

Food for Greek-speaking Widows

Others who care for all members

DEACONS

Various servant roles in the church

Others who cared for 5000 members

The mention of “overseers” (elders) before deacons (“overseers and deacons”) shows their prominence (Phil 1:1). There is evidence for deacons only here at Philippi and also at Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

###### Elders protect believers from heresy (a shepherd uses his rod against enemies).

Judge doctrinal error (Acts 15:6)

Guard the flock from false teachers (Acts 20:17, 28-31a)

Know the Word well to refute heretics (Titus 1:5, 6a, 9).

###### Elders lead believers (a shepherd guides his flock, a “household manager” takes care of the master’s servants, property, and finances).

Leading was to be primarily by example (1 Pet. 5:3).

“Shepherd the flock” includes leading the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2).

In biblical language, shepherding a nation or group means to lead or govern (2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:71-72).

Elders exercise oversight of the body (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2).

All elders should be honoured, meaning that the church assures that their material needs are met. Those elders who rule [lead, direct, manage] well should be paid the most, especially preachers and teachers (1 Tim. 5:17a).

This verse distinguishes between paid and unpaid elders, assuming that those with a vocation outside the church do not need any church salary. Elders who devote more time to the church should be paid more to relieve them of needing another means to make a living.

Taking into account (1)(e) above, three types of elders are noted in verses 17-18: unpaid, paid teachers/preachers, and paid managers (though all elders must be “able to teach”).

ALL ELDERS

Teach, protect, lead, serve, testify

Unpaid or $

if needed

PAID MANAGERS

$

PREACHERS

&

TEACHERS

$$

###### Elders serve/care for the church in practical ways:

The elders’ caring for the flock is parallel to managing one’s household (1 Tim. 3:5).

Pray for the sick (James 5:14). The anointing with oil was a role of the shepherds who took care of their sheep.

Help the weak in the flock (Acts 20:35). This probably refers to service such as counseling members and comforting those who are bereaved.

Work hard for the saints (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).

Provide official welcome to visitors (Acts 15:4).

###### Elders testify to the church and world in an official capacity:

Appoint (ordain) qualified leaders for the church (1 Tim. 4:14).

Accept and distribute money (Acts 11:30).

Send witnesses to serve in official capacities (Acts 15:22).

##### Shared Leadership

###### All NT texts show a plurality of leadership. References to “an overseer” (elder) in the singular (1 Tim. 3:1) speak only of one who represents the larger group of shepherds. This pastoral team is never called a “board” as “board” is an administrative term derived from the business world.

###### Paul modeled team ministry in all his travels (with Barnabas, Luke, Silas, etc.) and elder appointments (e.g., Acts 14:21).

##### Male Leadership

###### All OT and NT elders are men. Similarly, while Christ had both male and female disciples, all twelve original apostles were males (Matt. 10:1-4).

###### Male spiritual leadership for NT elders is in line with the OT pattern of having male priests. However, women sometimes served in administrative roles as queens and judges (Judg. 4–5). Further, women sometimes were prophetesses in both the OT (Exod. 15:20-21) and NT (Luke 2:36-38; 1 Cor. 11).

###### Male leadership is particularly underscored by the requirement that an elder be the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6).

##### Paid and Unpaid Leadership: "Lay eldership" MUST be biblical:

###### The NT elder pattern came from the elders of Israel known all the way back to Exodus 3:16. Were all of these elders paid through the centuries?

###### Paul appointed elders (plural) in EACH of the newly founded churches of Galatia (Acts 14:23). One wonders if these new assemblies could have afforded to support even one full-time elder, let alone all of them!

###### The 1 Timothy 5:17 elders fall into two classes: those unpaid and those paid. The NLT reads, "Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well,​ especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching.” This contrasts elders who are able to work hard with those who cannot or do not. It assumes that all elders will be committed to the task--but not all will have equal opportunity.

###### If the pastors are the only elders, we have a practical problem whether to have youth pastors as elders as they are too young and unqualified.

#### Elder Qualifications

##### Selecting Leadership for the Local Church

###### How Do Most Churches Select Their Leaders? (i.e., What criteria is often used to find out who will be the church deacons, elders, etc.?)[[18]](#footnote-18)

Popularity (attractiveness, charisma, and likable)

Past (tradition, “He's always had that office” mentality)

Politics (shrewdness, clout, manipulation)

Pocketbook (wealth, large church contributions, even bribery)

Profession (occupational standing—why do so few middle and lower class elders exist?)

###### How Should Churches Select Leaders? What Process of Selection and What Qualifications Must Potential Church Leaders Meet?

Scriptural Examples

APOSTLES: The Replacement of Judas (Acts 1:12-26)

Process of Selection: Congregational selection of candidates, prayer, drawing of lots, apostolic appointment. However, since we have no apostles anymore I believe that this process is not a pattern for us.

Qualifications: To be in “the twelve,” one had to be a participant in Christ’s ministry and eyewitness of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). For other apostles only the latter was required (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1). This is why no one today qualifies as an apostle.

DEACONS: The Church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-6)

Process of Selection: Congregational selection, apostolic appointment (Gr.: “ordain”)

Qualifications: Good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (v. 3; but see especially 1 Tim. 3:8-13 which is explained later in this study)

ELDERS: Titus' Responsibility (Titus 1:5-9)

Process of Selection: undefined, but Titus as an apostolic representative of Paul was to appoint (Gr.: “ordain”) the men once they had been selected. Perhaps elders were selected by congregational approval just as were the leaders in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 6:1-6 above). Today, when we have no apostolic delegates to ordain elders, ordination must come from the church leadership.

Qualifications: Titus 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 3:2-7 (explained on the following pages)

Scriptural Principles:

Qualifications apply only to men (women are excluded).

Qualifications are not optional but essential (all qualities must be true of one being considered; failure in one area should be reason for withholding appointment).

Qualifications primarily refer to one's present lifestyle and character, not his past (unless Scripture designates past actions as applicable to the present).

Qualifications refer to the office of elder (i.e., bishop, overseer, pastor) or deacon but not other church leadership positions (e.g., Sunday School teacher, care group leader).

Qualifications must be maintained in order to continue to function as an elder. Those who originally meet the qualifications but later neglect to maintain the standards must resign or be removed from the board.

Qualifications emphasize a man's character far more than his abilities (which may disqualify some of the most successful and shrewd businessmen within the church).

Qualifications emphasize a man's ability to manage his home more than his work.

##### An Examination of the Elder Qualifications (Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7)

###### Outline of the Qualifications

General Reputation (Titus 1:6a; 1 Tim. 3:2a)

Family Life (Titus 1:6b; 1 Tim. 3:2b, 4-5)

Negative Characteristics (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3a, 6)

Positive Characteristics (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2b, 3b, 7)

Teaching Requirement (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:2)

Note: A man’s *desire* to be an elder must precede any official evaluation (1 Tim. 3:1a). If a man does not want to become an elder, it matters little whether he qualifies, so even if “desire” is not considered a qualification, it certainly is relevant.

Elders are to be evaluated by all 20-22 criteria, depending on how one divides similar characteristics in parallel passages in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

“BAGD” in this study abbreviates the Greek lexicon by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker. This work is considered the standard dictionary for defining Greek words.

###### Examining the Qualities Individually (NIV translations underlined)

General Reputation (Titus 1:6a; 1 Tim. 3:2a)

Above Reproach is a qualification of general reputation that can be seen as an “umbrella principle” under which all the other traits fall.

(ane,gklhtoj Tit. 1:6, 10 [deacons]) means “blameless” (cf. KJV) or “irreproachable” (BAGD 64b) in the sense that no one can point a finger at his character or behavior with an accurate accusation—not perfect, but having a good reputation. This means not “merely unaccusable, but unaccused; not free from any just charge… but free from any charge at all…if any present [at the elder's ordination] had such a charge to bring, the ordination should not go forward until such a charge had been sifted” (Trench, 381). This requirement to be blameless excludes one guilty of sin in his past which the church would need to discipline (e.g., divorce, immorality, criminal offenses) or which affects his present reputation.

(anepivlhmpton 1 Tim. 3:2) is translated “above reproach,” being a synonym and also meaning “irreproachable” (BAGD) with the same sense as ajnevgklhtoj.

Respectable (kovsmion; 1 Tim. 3:2b) also has the idea “honorable” (BAGD) and is used of women who wear modest apparel (1 Tim. 2:9). The word refers to one who is living an orderly or well-arranged life, and Christ used the verb form (kosmevw) to designate a “well-ordered house” (Matt. 12:44), “well-trimmed lamps” (Matt. 25:7) and “decorated” tombstones (Matt. 23:29). A respectable man shows maturity which avoids personal excesses which may offend others, particularly weaker brothers and sisters. The church whose leaders do not earn respect will have a difficult experience.

[Having] a Good Reputation with Those Outside the Church (marturivan kalhVn e[cein ajpoV tw'n e[xwqen 1 Tim. 3:7) also is mandatory for one being considered for office. An elder should be respected both inside and outside the church. The phrase literally reads “to have a good witness from those outside.” This requirement disqualifies anyone known by unbelievers as a crooked businessman, a lazy worker, a tyrant, a hardheaded and insensitive man, etc. A “good reputation” can be very broad.

Note: The following qualities relate to a man’s genuine character, but the qualities above (“above reproach,” “respectable” and “good reputation”) denote his perceived character. A godly man who is not known as a godly man cannot qualify as elder.

Family Life (Titus 1:6b; 1 Tim. 3:2b, 4-5)

The Husband of One Wife (mia'" gunaikoV" a[ndra in 1 Tim. 3:2; mia'" gunaikoV" ajnhvr in Tit. 1:6) emphasizes a man's control in sexual restraint and a faithful relationship to his wife if he is married. (If he is not faithful in this second most important relationship in life should he be trusted in the affairs of the church?) This qualification excludes any husband unfaithful to his wife or one guilty of homosexuality, incest, and other sins of the flesh. (See the detailed evaluation at the end of this study on qualifications).

Having Responsible Children is generally translated like the NIV’s “whose children believe” (tevkna e[cwn pistav; Tit. 1:6) but may also be translated “having faithful children.” This alternate translation is preferable since: (1) parents are not ultimately responsible for the salvation of their children, and (2) because the parallel meaning is supported in 1 Timothy 3:4 where an elder is required to “manage his household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:12 for deacons). The word for “manage” is also used of elders who “rule” (1 Tim. 5:17). The meaning of “having faithful children” is explained in the following clause (below).

(Whose Children Are) Not Accused of Dissipation or Rebellion (mhV ejn kathgoriva/ ajswtiva”h} ajnupovtakta; Tit. 1:6) refers to the elder's children not being able to be slandered for riotous living or insubordination (“being wild or disobedient,” NIV), but rather being disciplined and restrained (able to accept authority). The man whose children are rebellious or excessive (drugs, sex, drunkenness, etc.) would best get his family under control before taking on responsibility as a church leader (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5).

Negative Characteristics (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3a, 6)

Not Self-Willed (mhV aujqavdh; Tit. 1:7) means that the man under consideration must not be “stubborn or arrogant” (BAGD), or not self-indulgent to the point of showing arrogance to others. He must be a protector of God's concerns (holiness, purity, faithfulness, etc.) rather than of selfish pursuits (desire for control in the church, overbearing, etc.). Humility is indispensable.

Not Quick-Tempered (mhV ojrgivlon; Tit. 1:7) means not “inclined to anger” (BAGD), not given to outbursts of wrath, not contentious or belligerent. Gentle (ejpieikh' 1 Tim. 3:3) or “yielding” and “kind” (BAGD) describes this characteristic positively.

Not Addicted to Wine (mhV pavroinon; Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3) properly describes one who is “not drunken” (BAGD). The literal translation is “not (one who lingers) beside (his) wine.” Temperate (nhfavlion; 1 Tim. 3:2) refers to the same idea, “literally temperate in the use of alcoholic beverages, sober, clear-headed, self-controlled” (BAGD). An alcoholic or heavy drinker should never be considered for the office of elder. Ideally an elder should be a non-drinker and at the most one who drinks with great moderation.

Not pugnacious (mhV plhvkthn; 1 Tim. 3:3) refers to a “pugnacious man, bully” (BAGD). This is a man who is “not violent” (NIV) and not given to blows, not eager to use his fists, and not argumentative. Certainly any man with a reputation for physical and emotional retaliation at others would not meet this elder qualification.

Uncontentious (a[macon; 1 Tim. 3:3b) properly understood refers to the quality of being “peaceable” (BAGD). Not only should the elder avoid fighting (“not pugnacious” above), but he must actively pursue unity and harmony within the body of Christ. One who has a tendency to “witch hunt” makes the work of the elders terribly difficult in the many potentially explosive situations that eventually face every church. If this characteristic is expected of all believers (Tit. 3:2), how much more for the leaders!

Not Pursuing Dishonest Gain (mhV aijscrokerdh'; Tit. 1:7) refers to one “not fond for dishonest gain, greedy for money” (BAGD 25a). He makes an honest living and is upright in all his business dealings since he is “not given to filthy lucre” (KJV). Free from the love of money (ajfilavrguron; 1 Tim. 3:3b) describes the characteristic positively. A man who gambles, hordes his money, or is pursuing the elder office for financial advantage is clearly disqualified, as would be one who refuses to at least tithe.

Not a New Convert (mhV neovfuton; 1 Tim. 3:6) means not “newly planted” and gives our English word “neophyte” (BAGD). Just how young of a Christian qualifies for eldership is not specifically designated, but Paul appointed elders from men less than a year old in Christ during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). However, they were not novices as they were steeped in Judaism. The principle is to appoint mature men in Christ, especially mature in humility to fight pride from being appointed to office.

Positive Characteristics (Tit. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2b, 3b, 7)

Hospitable (filovxenon; Tit. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:2), or “loving strangers” (Hendriksen), also should characterize one considered for the office of elder. The word for “hospitable” here is a compound word (fivlo", “brotherly love” plus xevno", “stranger, alien”) which means showing love towards those one doesn’t know. Does the man love and care for believers and strangers, or treat people with contempt, especially if they are of a different social status or race? One who still struggles with racial, religious, or social prejudices disqualifies himself on this requirement. “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14).

Loving What is Good (filavgaqon; Tit. 1:8) has the same root (fivlo", “brotherly love”) as above, meaning “loving goodness, virtuous, ready to do what is beneficial to others” (Hendriksen; cf. Phil. 4:8). The KJV, “a lover of good men,” is an inaccurate and unfortunate translation in its exclusiveness (especially since believers are commanded to love all men; cf. Rom. 13:8-10). “Loving what is good” in its simplest sense means loving God and what God loves. This characteristic would definitely disqualify from office one who approves of abortion, premarital and extramarital sex, and other harmful practices which are clearly forbidden by Scripture.

Sensible (swvfrona; Tit. 1:8) suggests being “of sound mind, reasonable, sensible, serious, keeping one's head” (BAGD). Prudent (swvfrona; 1 Tim. 3:2) expresses the same concept with a different English translation of the same Greek word. This connotes that an elder needs to be wise and balanced in his judgment, marked by a proper self-image (humility without self-condemnation) as Romans 12:3 exhorts. This quality excludes men known as lacking proper judgment or proud “know-it-alls.”

Just (divkaion; Tit. 1:8) is defined as “upright, righteous” (BAGD). Being just suggests a man who demonstrates impartiality in his decision making. He is fair, able to make mature judgments and characterized by practical righteousness affirmed in his lifestyle.

Devout (o{sion; Tit. 1:8) especially emphasizes a man's relationship with God as “devout, pious, pleasing to God, holy” (BAGD). One demonstrating this quality continually progresses in holiness to be more like Christ. He has made it a priority to “put on the new man” (Eph. 4:24). He is one of whom people declare, “He sure is a godly man!”

Self-Controlled (ejgkrath'; Tit. 1:8) also refers to being “disciplined” (BAGD). A man with excesses in habits, tardiness, anger, etc. reveals him to be undisciplined in his lifestyle and therefore not qualified for the office of elder. The point here is to require someone to exercise control over his own life before he is given control over the church.

Teaching Requirement (Tit. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:2)

Able to Teach (didaktikovn; 1 Tim. 3:2) and Holding Fast the Faithful Word… to Exhort (Encourage)… and to Refute… (Tit. 1:9) both specify that elders should have some aptitude for teaching, although not necessarily possessing the gift of teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). They need not be scholars, but they should have a good grasp of the Word of God for two purposes (Tit. 1:9b): (1) to exhort (encourage) others in sound doctrine, and (2) to refute those who contradict [sound doctrine].

This teaching qualification is no light order, especially since the responsibility covers a church-wide scale. It is imperative that an elder be well grounded in the “faithful word which is according to the teaching” (Tit. 1:9), and yet to be able to communicate the Word in a non-offensive manner. This characteristic excludes those with no aptitude for teaching on a group or one-on-one basis and those who possess only a superficial knowledge of the Bible, especially in its basic doctrines.

###### Summary of the Qualifications

For the most part, the preceding qualifications from 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 describe a man's character, not his abilities (exceptions being “able to teach” and “managing his household well”).

It can be concluded from this observation that God is more concerned with *who* a man is than *what* he can do, especially as this is revealed in his family relationships and general reputation as a man of God.

###### Practical Implications

The qualifications for elder are presented as a unit. No ratio or percentage of them that need to be true of a man appears in either 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1. Paul stressed each characteristic as vital. For these reasons we must conclude that all of them are necessary to accept a man as an elder. (If all the qualities were not mandatory, who would be so presumptuous to decide which ones are optional?)

This requirement of all the qualifications does not infer that the man must have *arrived* as a man of God, but that he is progressing toward greater spiritual maturity with these qualities as a foundation. The church should be instructed in the meanings of the requirements in a series of messages, then as a congregational body should decide upon each possible elder candidate who is put forward by a committee which recommends elders.

The question rises concerning how long to wait until such men are identified in a congregation. Scripture gives no time indication here. The temptation in some churches is to appoint men too quickly to this office; this leads to selecting elders who don’t really scripturally qualify.

However, this also doesn't mean that the body of believers should sit around and wait for qualified men to appear like magic. The pastor needs to build his life into several men with the prayer that many of them would eventually qualify to assist him as elders.

These men certainly can and should assist the pastor before assuming the title of elder. They do not need to be called elders to be useful to the church. Being discipled by the pastor allows them time for growth into men of God who then can serve as elders with the pastor as models of a church with high, biblical standards of church leadership.

Alexander Strauch sums up the importance of elder requirements:[[19]](#footnote-19)

It is highly noteworthy that the New Testament provides more instruction concerning the qualifications for eldership than on any other aspect of eldership. Such qualifications are not required of all teachers or evangelists. One person may be gifted as an evangelist and be used of God in that capacity, yet be unqualified to be an elder. An individual may be an evangelist immediately after conversion, but Scripture says that a new convert cannot be an elder (1 Timothy 3:6).

When we speak of the elders' qualifications, most people think that these qualifications are different than those of the clergy. The New Testament, however, has no separate standards for professional clergy and lay elders. The reason is simple. There aren't three separate offices--pastor, elders, and deacons--in the New Testament-style local church. There are only two offices--elders and deacons. From the New Testament perspective, any man in the congregation who desires to shepherd the Lord's people and meets God's requirements for the office can be a pastor elder.

##### A Closer Look at “Husband of One Wife” for Elders (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6) and Deacons (1 Tim. 3:12)

###### Various Translations

“The husband of one wife” (NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV, Beck, Amplified)

“The husband of but one wife” (NIV)

“Must have only one wife” (LB, Williams, TEV [The Everyday Bible])

“With only one wife” (Phillips)

“Faithful to his one wife” (NEB)

“A one-wife kind of a man [that is, married only once]” (Wuest, brackets his)

###### Greek Nuances

Literally, mia'" gunaikoV" a[ndra [ajnhvr], meaning “a one woman (wife) man (husband)” or “a man (husband) of one woman (wife).”

“Woman” and “wife” are both possible translations of the same Greek word (gunaikoV").

“Man” and “husband” are both possible translations of the same Greek word (ajnhvr, a[ndra).

The emphasis is upon the word “one” in the original.

###### Various Interpretations & Critiques

Prohibition of Those Not Married to the Church (i.e., must be celibate)

Strengths

The church is referred to as “the Bride of Christ” in Scripture.

Paul considered celibacy honorable (1 Cor. 7:37-38).

Weaknesses

While the church is frequently called the “bride of Christ” in the NT, it is never referred to as the “wife of Christ.”

Although celibacy is honorable, if it was necessary for church leadership then the requirements regarding the elder’s children and family management would have no meaning (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6).

If Paul required the single lifestyle for church leadership, he would be excluding even some of the married apostles such as Peter.

This view does not fit the context.

“Marriage” to the church is a concept foreign to Scripture.

This view is even abandoned by most Roman Catholic commentators today.

Prohibition of Single Men (i.e., must be married)

Strengths

Married men have a broader range of experience due to family responsibilities and could probably relate to more problems than single men.

“Husband” and “wife” seem to be better translations than “man” and “woman” since the following phase concerns the candidate's children.

Weaknesses

Paul considered the single life preferable over the married life (1 Cor. 7:37-38).

The same logic for marriage as a requisite would have to be used for the qualification “having children…” This would disqualify married men without children.

If Paul forbade the single lifestyle for church leadership, he would be contradicting his own warning against false teachers who prohibited marriage (1 Tim. 4:3).

If Paul forbade the single lifestyle for church leadership, he would be contradicting his own lifestyle as a single man (1 Cor. 7:8).

The qualification reads, “husband of one wife,” not “husband of a wife.”

Prohibition of Polygamy or Concubines

Strengths

One with two or more wives/mistresses can’t be called a “husband of one wife”!

Polygamy was practiced in the OT times even by men of God. God may be attaching a stricter rule here for leaders than that allowed in the OT.

Men with concubines was a frequent NT practice.

Weaknesses

Since polygamy and promiscuity are forbidden of all Christians the requirement must mean more than this.

There is no evidence that polygamy was practiced in the first century church. It was illegal by Roman, Greek, and Jewish law.

Prohibition of Remarried Widowers (Kelly, 75-76)

Strengths

Those who remarry following the death of a spouse may do so out of lack of self-control (1 Tim. 5:11-12).

Remarried widowers have had two wives, not one.

Most first and second century commentators taught this view as they saw remarriages as indicating lack of sexual self-restraint.

Paul considered unmarried widows happier than remarried widows (1 Cor. 7:40).

Weaknesses

A second marriage following a spouse's death does not necessarily imply lack of sexual self-restraint.

Remarried widowers still only have one wife at the time of consideration regarding elder requirements.

The practices of the church in the first few centuries are still subject to God's Word as their authority, and an ascetic bias prevailed during this time.

Paul allowed remarriage after the death of a spouse (1 Cor. 7:39).

Prohibition of Divorced Men Who Remarry

Strengths

Christ claimed that one who marries another while his first spouse is still living is an adulterer (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18). Similarly, Paul called a woman an adulteress if she is married to another man while her husband is living (Rom. 7:3).

Paul commanded divorced believers to remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

Divorce represents a failure in the home, and, though forgiven of the believer, disqualifies for church leadership.

Weaknesses

The emphasis in elder qualifications is upon one's present character, not his past. A man could have been a complete failure in a previous marriage but a success in the present one.

The past divorce could have been largely or even entirely the wife’s fault.

The reference to married men being “adulterers” in the Greek describes an act, not an ongoing condition or state. The sin is forgiven and forgotten in God’s book, so the church shouldn’t hold against someone what God Himself does not hold against him.

At the time of being considered for office the candidate would have but one wife (i.e., he has only had “one wife at a time”).

Husband Who is Faithful to His Wife

Strengths

It interprets the qualification as “a one-woman kind of man” as indicative of his character at present.

It interprets an ambiguous phase generally, not attaching any more meaning to it than the mere words allow. Being a “one-woman man” denotes a man who is not sexually promiscuous, who has his thought life under control, who is not flirtatious, etc.

Weaknesses

The phrase says nothing at all about moral faithfulness. The above interpretation is too general for a specific phrase mentioning the number of wives a man has had. If Paul had a general sense in mind, why did he not write, “morally pure” or “sexually upright” to clearly indicate moral integrity?

None of the Church Fathers of the first two centuries of the church interpreted this phrase this generally.

It is not unfair to disqualify a man for something he did in his past. Although every believer’s sin is forgiven, the consequences are often long-lasting.

###### Conclusion

Due to the ambiguity of the Greek phrase, the “husband of one wife” clause remains the most difficult church leadership qualification to understand. The primary question seems to be, “How stringent a standard did Paul mean by this phrase?”

In summary, six interpretations of the “husband of one wife” clause were examined. These exclude from the eldership any man who is:

“Married to the church” (elders must be single)

Single (elders must be married)

Polygamous or entertaining concubines

A remarried widower

A remarried divorcee

Not morally upright with and devoted to the wife he presently has

In my estimation, the last two views have the most to commend them. Chuck Swindoll agrees with the last view: “Taken in its most basic sense, it means that an overseer, if married, must be married to only one woman (which excludes bigamy, polygamy, and homosexuality) and must be devoted to his wife (which excludes promiscuity and an unhealthy marriage).”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Yet if the final view is correct, other issues regarding divorced men must be considered:

There is reason to question whether one who is divorced can be considered as “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). Failure in marriage is failure in the most important relationship in life.

Also, can a divorced man can be regarded as “one who manages his own household well” (1 Tim. 3:4-5; cf. Tit. 1:6)? As Paul pointed out, “If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 5:5).

Depending upon the views on divorce in society at large, it is also questionable whether a divorced man might be described as “having a good reputation with those outside the church” (1 Tim. 3:7). Even if this failure has now been remedied, the effects from such a failure (e.g., broken home with children) generally last throughout one’s lifetime and become public knowledge.

Therefore, “husband of one wife” may emphasize only that a man must be a faithful husband if married, but other qualifications could exclude from church leadership those divorced.

### Deacons

#### Deacon Texts: Here are all four of the NT occurrences of the term “deacon” and “deacons” as a basis of study for both qualifications and responsibilities:

##### Phil. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and ***deacons***:

##### 1 Tim. 3:8 ***Deacons***, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

##### 1 Tim. 3:10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as ***deacons***.

##### 1 Tim. 3:12 A ***deacon*** must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

#### Deacon Responsibilities

##### The roles of deacons are never clearly spelled out in the NT. However, “The Seven” selected in Acts 6:1-7 fulfilled a servant role to ease the administration load of the apostles and elders. By handling the administration of the food distribution to needy widows, these seven men freed the apostles and elders to fulfill their primary role of teaching and prayer.

##### The term “deacon” (diavkonoς *diakonos*) literally means “servant” of someone (Matt. 20:26; 23:11; Mark 10:43; BAGD 184d). It is generally used of a “helper” (1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6) or waiters at table (Josephus *Antiquities* 6.52). The four references to deacons as officers of the church are listed below. Some Scripture (of Phoebe in Rom. 16:1) and some early literature mention the feminine “deaconess” (by the Roman governor Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* 10.96.8 in approx. AD 113).

#### Deacon Qualifications

##### General Notes on Deacon Qualifications

###### The elder qualification study earlier noted that a man’s *desire* to be an elder must precede any official evaluation (1 Tim. 3:1a) since if he does not *want* to become an elder, it matters little whether he qualifies. Although not expressly stated in the following passage on deacon qualifications, obviously the same truth applies here as well. Thus, implicitly a man’s desire to be a deacon would have to precede or accompany any evaluation of his life.

###### As to the origin of the deacon office in the Church, this is not given in Scripture nor recorded for us in the extra-biblical writings. While the appointment of “the Seven” in Acts 6 in AD 34-35 may perhaps serve as model, nowhere are these seven men ever called deacons. In fact, over twenty years after their appointment (AD 57), Philip is still called one of “the Seven” (Acts 21:8), not “one of the Jerusalem deacons.” However, in AD 62 Paul addressed his letter to Philippi’s “elders and deacons” (Phil. 1:1) so the office was certainly known by this time.

###### As to the nature of the office (i.e., the responsibilities), this is also never laid out as in the case of the elders (cf. Acts 20:28, 35; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). However, since the term “deacon” means literally one who served in a menial capacity such as waiting on tables, it is evident that these persons fulfilled a role that was subservient to the board of elders. Elders were responsible for teaching and hospitality, roles that were never required of the diaconate.

##### Outline of the Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

###### Men: Specific Behavior (vv. 8-10)

###### Women: Specific Behavior (v. 11)

###### Men: Family Life (vv. 12-13)

##### Examination of the Qualities Individually

###### Men: Specific Behavior (vv. 8-10)

Worthy of Respect (semnov", v. 8) means “worthy of respect or honor, noble, dignified, serious” (BAGD 747a 1a). This quality was required of older men in general (Tit. 2:2). A respectable man shows maturity that avoids personal excesses that may offend others, particularly weaker brothers and sisters. The church whose leaders do not earn respect will have a difficult experience.

Sincere is the positive way to say “not double-tongued” (divlogo", v. 8; BAGD 198d; cf. NASB) and carries the idea of being one who is consistent in what he says. This means not being a “double-talker” who says “one thing to one man and a different thing to the next” (Kelly, 81). Deacons, being responsible for many servant tasks, must be men who can keep a tight rein on the tongue backed by integrity of heart.

Not Indulging in Much Wine (mhV oi[nw/ pollw/' prosevconta", v. 8; cf. elder qualification #9 “not addicted to wine” or “not (one who lingers) beside (his) wine” [mhV pavroinon] in Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:3) literally means one who is not “occupying oneself with, devoted or applying oneself to” wine (BAGD 714d 1c; cf. 1 Tim. 4:13). Temperate (nhfavlion; 1 Tim. 3:2) refers to the same idea, “literally temperate in the use of alcoholic beverages, sober, clear-headed, self-controlled” (BAGD 538d). An alcoholic or heavy drinker should never be considered for the office of deacon. Ideally a deacon should be an abstainer and at the most one who drinks with great moderation.

Not Pursuing Dishonest Gain (mhV aijscrokerdei'", v. 8, which is an alternate form of the elder qualification #12 mhV aijscrokerdh'; Tit. 1:7) means “not fond for dishonest gain, greedy for money” (BAGD 25a). He makes an honest living and is upright in all his business dealings since he is “not given to filthy lucre” (KJV). Free from the Love of Money (ajfilavrguron; 1 Tim. 3:3b) used for elders describes this characteristic positively. A man who gambles, hoards his money, or pursues the deacon office for financial gain is clearly disqualified. Also, his giving record reveals whether he loves God or loves money. Deacons are often entrusted with large sums of money in the congregation (offerings, alms, etc.) and must show restraint here before appointment.

Keep[ing] Hold of the Deep Truths of the Faith with a Clear Conscience (e[conta" toV musthvrion th'" pivstew" ejn kaqara/' suneidhvsei; v. 9) refers to adhering to “the mystery of the faith,” or doctrine received by special revelation (cf. Eph. 3:2-6). Today “mystery” denotes something concealed but in NT times it meant something revealed. A deacon must be firmly grounded in the basic, revealed, scriptural teachings and living in harmony with these doctrines. He need not be “able to teach” as is required of an elder, but he must hold firm personal convictions. This disqualifies from the diaconate men who lack assurance of salvation or have doubts about inerrancy, Christ’s virgin birth, His substitutionary death, Christ’s resurrection, etc.

Tested to See if There is Nothing Against Them (dokimazevsqwsan. . . ajnevgklhto", v. 10; elder qualification #1 in 1 Tim. 3:2a; Tit. 1:6) means to be “proved…blameless” (KJV) or “irreproachable” (BAGD 64b) in the sense that no one can point a finger at his character or behavior with an accurate accusation—not perfect, but having a good reputation. “Tested” means “to put to the test, examine” (BAGD 202c 1), but *how* such a test should be conducted is not specified. “Some have thought that a probationary period or a formal examination is envisaged, and either or both are possible” (Kelly, 83). Also, a candidate should have first proven himself responsible in *other* ministries in the church prior to consideration for the diaconate (cf. Matt. 25:21). This requirement to be blameless excludes one guilty of sin in his past which the church would need to discipline (e.g., divorce, immorality, criminal offenses) or which affects his present reputation.

###### Women: Specific Behavior (v. 11)

Verse 11 gives traits simply of women whose identity has long perplexed the Church, partly because the word here (gunaiko,j) can be legitimately translated as “women” or “wives.” At least six views on this phrase prevail. Are these: (1) women in general, (2) wives of both elders and deacons, (3) a group similar to deacons in function but subordinate to them in rank,[[21]](#footnote-21) (4) deacons' wives,[[22]](#footnote-22) (5) deaconesses (woman deacons),[[23]](#footnote-23) or (6) deacon’s wives who are *called* deaconesses?[[24]](#footnote-24)

The first view is dismissed by the context that addresses qualifications for an office. The second is unlikely in that the verse about women (v. 11) falls in the section about deacon qualifications (vv. 8-13). The third and fourth are most likely while the fifth has weaknesses (explained below). The sixth view does not differ much from the fourth.

Some translations and scholars render the ambiguous phrase ambiguously (NASB, RSV, Amplified, TEB).

Most English translations and scholars argue that they are deacons’ wives (view #4). I hold this view or else view #3 above for the following reasons:

Since the verse about women (v. 11) divides the male deacon qualifications into two sections (vv. 8-10 and 12-13) it makes good sense that the women related very closely to the male deacons, mostly likely as their wives.

While it is true that deaconesses existed in the church in the second century (cf. Pliny to Trajan Eps. 10.96-97; cf. others in Kelly, 84), whether this was the case in the first century is debatable (Earle, EBC, 11:368).

In light of Paul’s former prohibition of women exercising authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12) it would be inconsistent of him to advocate a group of women serving with equal authority with the male deacons.

Some translations and scholars argue that they are woman deacons:

It seems unusual that Paul would prescribe qualifications for wives of deacons but not for wives of elders (who occupied a more influential position).

Response: Elders may be sworn to secrecy in private affairs of the church so that they would not even inform their wives. However, deacons often participate in serving ministries in conjunction with their wives; thus wives of deacons would need to have a tighter control of their tongue than wives of elders (?).

Nothing about the office of deacon would exclude women (viz., they do not teach or exercise authority over men; cf. 1 Tim. 2:12).

Response: This is an argument from silence and therefore carries little weight. The fact that a deacon must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:12) shows he must be a man.

If deacons’ wives were meant Paul could have been clearer by writing either “having wives” (cf. “having children…” in v. 4) or “their wives” or at least “the women.”

Response: This is also an argument from silence carrying little weight. Adding either word would have cleared up the problem but evidently Paul felt he was already clear. Since it is in the context of deacons he felt a qualifying word was unnecessary.

Phoebe provides a biblical example of a woman who was a deaconess (Rom. 16:1). The masculine form of the word is used here (diavkono") since no feminine form existed at the time. The masculine form was used of women as well.

Response: The word here can simply mean “servant.” The word need not designate an office.

The word “likewise” in verse 8 set apart deacons as a different office from the preceding elder qualifications (vv. 1-7). In the same way, “likewise” reappears in verse 11 to indicate another class of persons. Thus, “Paul chose to introduce the women in a manner which set them parallel to the elders and deacons, implying a new, similar class of persons. He said, ‘Women, likewise…’” (Hurley, 230).

Response: If Paul meant to set the women apart as a separate office it would seem strange to do so in the midst of his discussion of deacon qualifications. The more natural sequence would be to finish the deacon qualifications first, then explain women deacon requirements.

Summary

One cannot be dogmatic about interpreting this difficult passage, but the two best views seem to indicate either deacons’ wives or women deaconesses not related to the deacons. At the present time due to the contextual factors it seems to me that the deacons’ wives perspective has the most to commend it.

Anyway, the point of the verse is that proper conduct of *women*, not just men, is essential to the proper functioning of the church. In general women are more relational than men, which has both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that they are more available to meet counseling needs in the church, but the disadvantage is that being trusted with such information requires restraint of the tongue to prevent gossip.

Actually whether women can have the title of “deaconess” is irrelevant. They can serve in the church in hundreds of ways without holding an office. Also, the guidelines in verse 11, while not directed at all women generally, are still a good model for any woman to pursue.

One final observation may be noteworthy: the four women qualifications closely parallel those of deacons:[[25]](#footnote-25)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Deacons (v. 8) | Women (v. 11) |  |
|  |  |  |
| worthy of respect | worthy of respect | deacon quality # 7 |
| (*semnous*) | (*semnas—*the feminine form of *semnous*) |  |
|  |  |  |
| not double-tongued | not slanderers | deacon quality #8 |
| (*me dilogous*) | (*me diabolous*) |  |
|  |  |  |
| not given to much wine | sober/temperate | deacon quality #9 |
| (*me oino pollo prosechontas*) | (*nephalious*) |  |
|  |  |  |
| not pursuing dishonest gain | trustworthy in all things | deacon quality #10 |
| (*me aischrokerdeis*) | (*pistas en pasin*) |  |

“The qualifications are point for point parallel. The final item in each list has to do with trustworthiness. In the case of the deacon it looks to his business life. In the case of the women, it looks to their handling of daily affairs and relationships, perhaps because few women were involved in business affairs” (Hurley, 231). The significance of these parallel features is left up to the reader.

###### Men: Family Life (vv. 12-13)

The Husband of One Wife (mia'ÆÆ"ÆÆ gunaikoV" a[ndra; cf. equivalent designations for elders in elder qualification #4; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6) emphasizes a man's control in sexual restraint and a faithful relationship to his wife if he is married. (If he is not faithful in this second most important relationship in life should he be trusted in the affairs of the church?) This qualification excludes any husband unfaithful to his wife or one guilty of homosexuality, incest, and other sins of the flesh. (See the detailed evaluation of this requirement prior to this study on deacon qualifications).

Must Manage His Children and His Household Well (tevknwn kalw'" proi>stavmenoi kaiV tw'n ijdivwn oi[kwn) is parallel to elder qualifications #5-6 where an elder is required to “manage his household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity” (1 Tim. 3:4; cf. Tit. 1:6). No charge should exist against a deacon’s children for riotous living or insubordination, but rather they should be disciplined and restrained (able to accept authority). A deacon candidate whose children are rebellious or excessive (drugs, sex, drunkenness, etc.) should get his family under control before taking on responsibility as a church leader (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5).

##### Results: Two results of serving well as a deacon are provided in verse 13:

###### A good reputation before people and God (perhaps “promotion” to pastor or elder is in view).

###### Increased confidence in dealing with other people (Constable, 24).

##### For Further Study on Deacons

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###### Hiebert, D. Edmond. “Behind the Word ‘Deacon’: A New Testament Study.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (April-June 1983): 151-62.

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#### Chart on Elder and Deacon Qualifications

By way of review it may be good to compare and contrast the traits required elders and deacons. Similar characteristics are placed in parallel columns in the following chart (trait #s in parentheses):

**Unique to Elders** **Unique to Deacons** **Required of Both Offices**

Respected by non-Christians (3) Tested (6a) Blameless/above reproach (1/6b)

Not a new convert (13) Wife respectable (7) Respectable (2/1)

Not quarrelsome/contentious (11) Wife not a slanderer (8) Husband of one wife (4/11)

Self-controlled (19) Wife temperate (9) Not addicted to wine/temperate (9/3)

Not a lover of money (12b) Wife trustworthy (10) Not pursuing dishonest gain (12a/4)

Children believe or faithful (5) Children obey/managed well (6/12)

Able to teach (20a) Holds basic doctrines (20b/5)

Not self-willed (7) Sincere/not double-talker (2)

Not quick-tempered (8)

Gentle/not violent (10)

Hospitable (14)

Loves what is good (15)

Sensible/prudent (16)

Just/fair (17)

Devout/holy (18)

#### A Summary Elder-Deacon Differences

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Elders** | **Deacons** |
| Alternate Names | Bishops (Phil. 1:1), overseers (1 Tim. 3:1), pastors (Eph. 4:11) | “The Seven” (Acts 6:3; 21:8) |
| Number of NT References | Twenty-four (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; 4:14; 5:17-19; Tit. 1:5-6; Jas. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:2) | Two (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8) |
| Authority in the Church | Highest | Lower |
| Responsibilities | * *Teach* the church * *Protect* flock from heresy * *Lead* church in God’s will * *Care* for the believers * *Testify* to the church and world in an official capacity | Never listed in the NT, but the Acts 6 single task precedent (food distribution) shows a limited service of administering only in a certain area |
| Qualifications | Extensive: includes teaching  (1 Tim. 3:2) | More Limited: includes wives  (1 Tim. 3:11) |
| Pastoral Leadership | The word “pastors” appears only once in the NT (Eph. 4:11) and, due to having the same function as elders, was a paid elder whose work was full-time teaching and preaching (1 Tim. 5:17) | The concept of a single pastor leading a group of deacons is totally contrary to Scripture; deacons were lead by a group of elders and were not a “deacon council” as they had no pastoral oversight |
| Function as a Group | Extensive NT evidence exists for one team of elders per church; in fact, there exists no mention of an elder/pastor leading alone rather than being part of a group | No NT evidence exists for deacons serving as one group—likely different groups of deacons served in various areas under leadership of the elders as in Acts 6 |

#### Questions: When churches transition from the pastor-deacons model to the NT pattern of elder leadership, people often ask some relevant questions.

##### “Can’t the former deacons just continue to lead but now with the new title of ‘elders’?” This is a natural question, but asking it shows the distinction between these two offices hasn’t been seen yet. But why can’t the titles simply change while keeping the same leaders? Here are some reasons:

###### Those who qualify as deacons may not qualify as elders—especially if they can’t teach or provide pastoral oversight over the flock. Deacons administer budgets and programs, which certainly involve people, but the greater challenge is to shepherd people in their deepest crises.

###### Being an elder is much more demanding than being a deacon. Elders are the highest church authority and shepherd the entire flock; in contrast, deacons administrate a limited ministry area. Even a man *qualified* to be an elder must have the *time* to invest in this ministry.

###### Obviously, one’s age is a factor in becoming an elder or else the term *elder* would be meaningless. Whereas Scripture give no minimum age, elders should be among the older men in a congregation. In contrast, nothing in the term “deacon” indicates an age requirement, although such men should be mature for their age.

##### Should the elders and deacons function as separate boards? While some churches do have this practice, it has some serious disadvantages:

###### The chief problem here is that there exists no NT evidence of a single deacon board (council) that assists the elders.

###### Some churches try to divide tasks between the elders (for “spiritual” issues) and deacons (for “material” matters). However, making such a distinction is not easy. Are budget priorities spiritual or administrative? Is worship (a key corporate responsibility) a spiritual matter to be handled by elders or should it be delegated to deacons?

###### Setting up two boards creates a non-biblical structure that inevitably results in a “power-play.” Even if it is clear that the elders are the higher authority, putting both elders and deacons on the same council brings confusion, misunderstanding, and hurt feelings.

##### What is a better elder and deacon structure?

###### Elders should serve as the highest governing council in the church.

###### Deacons should handle *various* committees composed entirely of deacons who meet the requirements of 1 Timothy 3:8-12. Each of these committees should then report directly to the elders.

###### The ambiguous “women” (v. 11) in the deacon qualifications of 1 Timothy 8-12 are likely deacon wives (see pages 79-82 of my Ecclesiology notes). However, if the church deems them independent “deaconesses,” they should serve on committees that submit to the elders instead of being part of the same council. The NT gives not even a hint of evidence for a council of both men and women at the highest governing level in the church.

#### Difficult Leadership: Why is being an elder or deacon so difficult?

##### Few Christian men can genuinely qualify for the 20 or more elder requirements noted in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

##### One can be sure that Satan and his demons will concentrate untiring efforts to make sure leaders will not function in their biblical role.

##### The time demands to meet the pastoral needs of people are extensive! Not many men can manage their own family well and meet the needs of the flock at the same time—particularly if they are also employed outside the church.

Alexander Strauch comments at length on the time demanded of elders:[[26]](#footnote-26)

**Hard** **Work** **and** **Sacrifice:** When the church eldership is viewed as a status or board position in the church, there will be plenty of volunteers. When it is viewed as a demanding, pastoral work, few people will rush to volunteer. One reason there are so few shepherd elders or good church elderships is that, generally speaking, men are spiritually lazy. That is a major reason why most churches never establish a biblical eldership. Men are more than willing to let someone else fulfill their spiritual responsibilities, whether it be their wives, the clergy, or church professionals.

Biblical eldership, however, can't exist in an atmosphere of nominal Christianity. There can be no biblical eldership in a church where there is no biblical *Christianity.* If a biblical eldership is to function effectively, it requires men who are firmly committed to living out our Lord's principles of discipleship. Biblical eldership is dependent on men who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), men who have *presented* themselves as living and holy sacrifices to God and view themselves as slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12: 1, 2), men who love Jesus Christ above all else, men who willingly sacrifice self for the sake of others, men who seek to love as Christ loved, men who are self-disciplined and self-sacrificing, and men who have taken up the cross and are willing to suffer for Christ.

Some people say, "You can't expect laymen to rear their families, work all day, and shepherd a local church." That statement is simply not true. Many people rear families, work, and give substantial hours of time to community service, clubs, athletic activities, and/or religious institutions. The cults have built up large lay movements that survive primarily because of the volunteer time and efforts of their members. We Bible-believing Christians are becoming a lazy, soft, pay-for-it-to-be-done group of Christians. It is positively amazing how much people can accomplish when they are motivated to work toward a goal they love. I've seen people build and remodel houses in their spare time, for example. I've also seen men discipline themselves to gain a phenomenal knowledge of the Scriptures.

## Biblical Decision Making

### How were decisions made in the Bible?

An Important Consideration: What *methods* of decision-making were employed in the OT and NT and which of these (if any) is the appropriate method for us today?

#### Choice by the leader (Moses chose judges, Exod. 18:21, 25)

#### Drawing lots (Joshua decided the tribal boundaries by lot, Josh. 14:1-2)

#### Urim and Thummin were probably stones of different colours which the priest used to determine “yes” or “no” answers from God.

##### Exod. 28:30 Also put the **Urim and the Thummim** in the breast piece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD (cf. Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8).

##### 1Sam. 28:6 He inquired of the LORD, but the LORD did not answer him by dreams or **Urim** or prophets.

##### Ezra 2:63 The governor ordered them not to eat any of the most sacred food until there was a priest ministering with the **Urim and Thummim** (cf. Neh. 7:65)

#### Placing a fleece before the Lord (by Gideon, Judges 6:36-40).

#### Other methods were also used.

### Was it unanimity, majority (democracy), monarchy, or consensus vote?

The Key Issue: What *percentage* (if any) for decision-making is the biblical pattern— unanimity, consensus, majority vote, or some other percentage?

#### Acts 15: A Significant Chapter on Early Church Decision-Making

##### Context: The gospel has already spread to the three main groups of believers and become established for a few years:

###### AD 33: Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2)

###### AD 35: Samaritans at Azotus (Acts 8)

###### AD 40: Gentiles at Cornelius’ House (Acts 10)

###### AD 41: Gentile church planted at Antioch (Acts 11)

###### AD 48-49: Paul and Barnabas on 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 14–15)

##### Issue #1: Circumcision

###### Conflict: The church leaders disagree whether circumcision should be required of Gentile believers.

Unauthorized Judaizers from the Jerusalem church came to Antioch to insist that Gentile converts be circumcised (i.e., become Jewish) in order to be saved (15:1)

Paul and Barnabas argued with them in Antioch (15:2a).

Since neither the Judaizers nor Paul and Barnabas changed their minds, the Antioch church sent them all (with witnesses as well) to Jerusalem to appeal to the apostles and elders (15:2b-4).

###### Process of Decision-making

The leaders (elders and apostles at Jerusalem) listened carefully to both sides of the issue.

Paul and Barnabas reported God’s work among the Gentiles (15:4).

Then the Judaizers (Pharisees) presented their case (15:5).

The leaders allowed Peter to defend his view that they need not become Jews since the same Holy Spirit came upon them at salvation. Thus they were already saved without being circumcised.

The chairman (James) proposed a compromise solution that would address the truth of the gospel but also Jewish sensitivities.

The whole group agreed to a written decision.

###### Conclusion

##### Issue #2: John Mark

###### Problem: John Mark’s desertion on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:13)

###### Process of Decision-making: Argument

###### Resolution: Separation

### How were other NT decisions made?

Trust is key: Trust is slowly built, quickly broken, and even more slowly rebuilt, if ever!

The #1 quality that followers most want in their leaders is *trustworthiness* (integrity)–—Kouzes & Posner

The #1 quality in the 1980s that followers wanted in leaders was *competence*—this was before Bill Clinton’s presidency, which changed perceptions significantly.

The #1 cause of failure in leadership is relational. —Center for Creative Leadership

The #1 reason for missionary resignations prior to 1995 was *relational*—inability to get along with fellow coworkers. Now it is internet *pornography*.

Trustless Teams Symptoms Have Factors that Foster Mistrust:

* Poor communication habits
* Inflexibility
* Lack of respect
* Hidden agenda
* Avoidance of conflict
* Unpredictable behaviour
* Broken commitments
* Reliability (punctuality, dependability)
* Denial/Defensiveness

Sources of Trust

* Character
* Competence
* Communication

Organizational Factors That Contribute to Trustless/Non-Functional Teams

* A corporate/team culture that allows failure to continue unchallenged (mission agencies are the worst offenders as they rarely let people go for incompetence)
* A weak or unclear sense of direction
* Insufficient or unequal commitment to team
* Unresolved interpersonal conflicts
* Critical skill gaps

Approaches to Getting “Unstuck”

* Revisit the basics—purposes, goals, methods
* Go for small wins
* Inject new information and approaches
* Take advantage of experienced facilitators
* Change the team’s membership and even leadership
* Persistent prayer

Living in Community

* Comparison kills relationships (over national friends, support, language ability)
* Judging (“I can’t believe they let their kids go to movies” mentality)
* Gossip (couched in prayer requests!)
* Encouragement daily is vital (Heb 3:13; coaching is expected to be a $1 billion industry by 2022 because Americans will pay this much for someone to listen! How good are you at listening? How can you get better at it?)
* Humility—“I am gentle and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29) is the only way Jesus described himself

## Discussion Questions

### Questions on Elders & Deacons

#### Did all NT churches have both elders and deacons? Or did they have elders alone until the needs required deacon assistance?

#### Why does Scripture invest authority in a plurality of elders rather than a single pastor?

#### Why does Scripture give pastoral responsibility to the highest office in the church (elders) rather than to lower offices (deacons)?

#### What happens in a church when the highest office is primarily administrative rather than pastoral?

#### Why is “able to teach” required of elders but not deacons?

#### Why is “hospitality” required of elders but not deacons?

#### Can churches that have multiple pastoral staff and deacons change the title of the pastoral staff to “elders” so as to fit the NT pattern? Why or why not?

#### Should deacons serve as a separate board equal to the team of elders? If not, should a deacon board be subordinate to the elders? If not, should deacons serve at the committee level under the elders but not as a “deacon board”?

#### Is the elder model contradictory or consistent with the Baptist distinctive of ultimate congregational authority? Why or why not?

#### Should a church functioning under a deacon model change the name of the existing board from “deacons” to “elders” to reflect more biblical terms? Why or why not?

### Questions on Normative Structure

#### How can we know if the leadership structure that we find in Scripture is normative (a pattern for all time)? The larger issue is how we know a practice in Scripture was culturally bound or not. At least three options exist in this regard:

##### Flexibility: NT churches disagreed in practice on some issues because the issues were not important enough for each church to have to follow. Certainly different house churches followed different styles of music given the variety of cultural backgrounds (Jewish, Greek, Roman, etc.), as well as worshipped in different languages, etc.

##### Normative for the NT Culture: All the churches followed a certain practice but this practice is not expected today. This is because it does not communicate the same thing it did in the first century. Therefore, since the meaning is lost, the practice should not be expected.

###### Wearing sandals when witnessing, along with taking no money or extra clothes (Matt. 10:9-10)

###### Head coverings for women in worship (1 Cor. 11:1-16)

##### Normative for All Cultures: All the churches followed this pattern as an example of what churches should do for all time.

###### Ordinances (Lord’s Supper and Baptism)

###### Limitation of women from teaching men—especially in the role of an elder (1 Tim 2:10-11)

###### We find no NT church that functioned under another leadership structure other than the eldership. Even in Philippi which had a small Jewish segment of the church (if any), the church was led by elders (overseers) supplemented by deacons (Phil 1:1 notes the overseers first, indicating their priority).

#### We must establish a structure that is flexible to change. By the way, the church *can* change. Dr. Mahlon Friesen, senior pastor of my home church in California, led this church to become an elder church in March 1999 after the church functioned under a deacon model for 87 years! He noted to me via email his flexible philosophy: “Part of what we are trying to do is

##### Maintain congregational accountability (hence a modified elder board). I believe eldership effectiveness is directly related to the quality of community in the congregation. Imposed eldering fails unless they are viewed as spiritual fathers. Few churches possess biblical community, thus few churches will ever experience true eldering.

##### Allow room for future changes in form as we develop.

##### Allow for growth rather than presume that we have perfect candidates or a perfect model of an elder board.

##### Move to a ‘permission-giving’ structure so that top-down leadership does not consume elders.

##### Emphasize the spiritual visioning and shepherding role of elders.”

## Views on Church Government

### Views Contrasted

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Episcopal** | **Presbyterian** | **Congregational** | **Elder/**  **Congregational** |
| Definition | Bishop rule over several churches (hierarchical) | Local church elders submit to higher bodies | Local church members have ultimate say | Local church members vote is balanced with elected elders |
| Structure | Archbishop  Bishop  Archdeacon  Vicar  Priest  Warden  PCC  Leaders  Congregation | General Assembly  Synod  Presbytery  Session  Local church | Congregation  Deacons  Pastor(s) | Elders/Pastors  Deacons  Congregation |
| Unique Elements | Various levels of clergy  Most hierarchical structure | One level of clergy  Teaching and ruling elders distinguished  (1 Tim. 5:17) | One level of clergy  Democratic  Local church autonomy  Single pastor per church common | One level of clergy  Democratic  Local church autonomy |
| Denominations and Groups | Anglican/Episc.  Lutheran  Methodist  Orthodox  Catholic | Presbyterian  Reformed  Bible Presbyterian | Congregational  Baptist  C&MA  Mennonite  Evangelical Free  Pentecostal | Bible churches  Baptist  C&MA  Brethren  Independent |
| Biblical Support  Cited | OT precedent of single leader  Matt. 16:18; 18:18; 28:18-20 (apostolic succession)  Acts 6:3, 6 (bishop ordaining)  Acts 15:13 (James ruled)  Tit. 1:5 (Titus ordained elders) | OT precedent of rule by elders  Acts 11:30 (elders handled finances)  Acts 14:23 (group of elders per church)  Acts 15 (assembly higher than local church)  Acts 20:17f. (elders as ultimate church authority) | Matt. 18:17; Acts 1; 6:3-5; 11:22; 15:25; 1 Cor. 5:12; 2 Cor. 2:6-7; 2 Thess. 3:14; 1 John 2:20; 4:1 (group decisions)  Elder, bishop, pastor & overseer synonymous (1 Tim. 3:1 vs. Tit. 1:5)  1 Pet. 2:9 (priesthood of believers)  NT focus on local church (many vv.) | Presbyterian column (except Acts 15 is not seen as denoting an assembly higher than the local church)  +  Congregational verses  Acts 6:3, 6 has congregational nomination and  apostolic ordination |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Episcopal** | **Presbyterian** | **Congregational** | **Elder/**  **Congregational** |
| Biblical Refutation | No structure in NT over the local church (James presided rather than ruled)  Ordination by congregation (Acts 13:3), not bishop  Apostolic succession unproved  Bishop vs. presbyter distinction unwarranted  Jesus gave all disciples equal authority | No clear evidence of structure above the local church (Jerusalem church in Acts 15 had no authority over Antioch as decision made by apostles, elders, & whole church in v. 22; also, the Acts 15 Council was not permanent like a synod)  Priesthood of believers not sustained with elders who lord it over the flock | Single pastor (=elder) concept unbiblical as elders always functioned as a group  The NT has no independent churches |  |
| Practical Advantages | Efficiency  Unity (less church splits?) | Decisions made by groups and mature believers | Group decision making  Congregation has significant input | Balance of power between elders & congregation |
| Practical Disadvantages | Too much authority in one person (bishop)  Little place for congregational input | Too much authority in groups (elders or higher bodies)  Little place for congregational input  Synods often lead churches to heresy | Inefficiency  Major decisions often made by the uninformed  Disunity (church splits)  Pastor too often seen as employee rather than a leader | Danger of an overpowering elder board  Difficulty determining which issues are elder issues and which are congregational |

### Questions on Church Government

#### Does it really matter which form of government a church follows as long as the people submit to their leaders and the leaders function as servant leaders?

#### Is the NT form of elders necessarily normative for today since it basically came out of a cultural context anyway? (Since the earliest believers were Jews, they would naturally have adopted the synagogue elder concept, so in like manner should we not follow the culturally accepted pattern today?)

# Church Discipline

*Tough Love to Restore Wayward Believers to God and His Church*

## Definitions

### What is church discipline?

#### Galatians 6:1 provides a good starting point to discover what discipline is all about:

##### “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”

##### This verse provides the following definition of church discipline: The believers’ spiritual, gentle and humble process of restoring to the fellowship a member ensnared in a sin.

##### Here’s a shorter definition: “Church discipline is God’s loving plan for restoring sinning saints”*[[27]](#footnote-27)*

#### Parental discipline offers an illustrative parallel. Parents lovingly correct their children when they sin to restore them to harmony with the rest of the family.

##### God disciplines those who are truly His sons which finds parallel in the human father who does the same (Heb. 12:7-13).

##### Hebrews 12 reveals that true discipline proves several things:

###### The child is truly in the family (12:9).

###### The Father has in mind the best interest for His child (12:10a)

###### The Father desires that each son participate in His holiness (12:10b).

###### While painful during the process, discipline ultimately results in righteous living and peace (12:11).

### What is *not* biblical church discipline?

#### Excommunication bars errant Catholics from attending church without seeking to restore them; however, the biblical goal is to enfold rather than to punish or cut off the offender.

#### Public humiliation is not the goal of church discipline since the process is designed to keep the sin as private as possible (unless the restoration must eventually need the help of the entire church or it involves an elder).

#### “Holier Than Thou” attitudes in discipline do not constitute biblical discipline. Rather, the whole process should be handled humbly and gently.

#### “Heresy Hunts” also misjudge true discipline, which deals with matters as they arise rather than systematically investigating all church members for impropriety.

## Reasons Churches Fail to Discipline

### Churches are uninformed.

#### Believers misunderstand “Judge not, lest you be judged” (Matt. 7:1).

#### Most Christians don’t know how to discipline errant members since they are never taught this doctrine (and other unpleasant teachings).

### Churches doubt whether the sin is actually worthy of discipline

#### We all sin to some extent, so how does one know if a person has sinned enough to the point of needing discipline?

#### We will look later at a biblical list of sins warranting correction by the church.

### There exists a lack of examples when discipline succeeded

#### We all know bad examples when it was not done biblically.

#### How many times have you personally seen the biblical process restore an errant believer?

### People fear the outcome.

#### Fear that the offender may leave the church (and take his money with him).

#### Fear that exposing the sin will hurt the reputation of the church or offender.

### The church justifies sin (“We all sin, so why highlight one of us for public shame?”)

### Believers have too low a view of the holiness of God.

### Church relationships are so shallow that people do not really know or care for others.

### The leaders are divided how to respond to the sinner.

## Results of Failing to Discipline[[28]](#footnote-28)

### Lack of purity: Spiritual infection spreads rapidly (1 Cor. 5:6; Heb. 12:15; 2 Tim. 2:16-17) even though God desires purity (Eph. 5:25-27).

### Lack of power: Israel decidedly defeated the strong Jericho but could not win over the small Ai due to the sin of one member (Josh. 7). As the whole nation was guilty and disciplined, so the entire church loses God’s blessing when discipline is ignored.

### Lack of progress: Until the sin is dealt with as Israel was purged of Achan (Josh. 8:1-19), the church will decline in attendance or in a leanness of the soul.

## The Process of Discipline

### The way in which the church should correctly restore a sinning Christian is by keeping it as private as possible (Exegetical Idea of Matt. 18:15-17):

#### (15) A private sin should be dealt with only between those directly involved so as to make restoration of the offender easier.

##### Discipline at this stage is the responsibility of the brother or sister most close to the situation. This role should never be passed onto someone else—even if others are more experienced, spiritually mature, etc.

##### The person who confronts must be convinced that the other person is indeed in true sin. If the person doubts this, s/he can seek counsel regarding the scriptural reasons for discipline (cf. p. 99) without revealing the name of the supposed offender.

#### (16) Unrepentant sin after a private confrontation should be exposed only to one or two more persons in order to facilitate restoring the sinner.

##### Bringing another believer into the process helps the first Christian to see another perspective on the situation. Those brought into the process could be others who know the offender or else official church leaders.

##### Often at this point the 1-2 friends will either help the offender see the magnitude of the sin or else help the accusing believer see that this is actually not a sin after all.

#### (17a) Unrepentant sin after a small group attempt at restoration should be brought before the entire church body as a deterrent to continued sin.

##### It presupposes that the official church leadership will need to be brought into the process at this point if they were not included in stage 2 above.

##### This step should not take place at the normal church meeting where unbelievers or nonmembers could be present.

#### (17b) Unrepentant sin after exposure to the church should result in requiring each church member to relate to the sinner as an unbeliever.

##### Don’t refer to the person as a Christian.

##### Evangelize this person as if s/he is an unbeliever (but see 2 Thess. 3:15).

##### Do not let the person participate in the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14-17).

##### Remove the person from membership.

##### Remove this person from any responsibility in the church.

##### “Deliver over to Satan” one involved in sexual sin (1 Cor. 5:5).

##### Don’t eat with him/her (1 Cor. 5:11).

##### Prohibit the sinner from attending church (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6, 14).

### While Matthew 18 gives the clearest step-by-step procedure in Scripture, other texts also give insights on the process:

#### As noted above, those confronting the offender must be *spiritual, gentle and humble*, meaning that they are not guilty of the same sin themselves (Gal. 6:1).

#### The church meeting to remove the person from membership should include a *handing over the person to Satan*, meaning to officially remove the offender from protection by God and the church for the devil to afflict (1 Cor. 5:5).

### The church should respond properly to a repentant believer under discipline:

#### The person should be *restored* to complete status as a member with all punishment stopped (2 Cor. 2:6). As for resuming prior responsibilities, these are not given in the NT but probably should be resumed over time.

#### The church members must forgive, comfort, and affirm their love for the returned saint (2 Cor. 2:7-8).

## Reasons for Discipline[[29]](#footnote-29)

### The key reason given by Jesus Christ that the church can restore or excommunicate errant believers is because it acts as an extension of the authority of God Himself (Matt. 18:18-20):

#### (18-19) Churches that prayerfully restore or excommunicate sinful believers act in the place of the Father.

##### (18) The church must announce guilt or innocence based upon what God has already determined.

##### (19) Church leaders who prayerfully make a judgment can have confidence that they have acted according to God’s will.

#### (20) Churches that restore or excommunicate sinful believers act in the presence of Jesus Christ.

### Concerning the Offender

#### It restores and reconciles the offender to God and to the fellowship (Gal. 6:1)

#### It stimulates the offender to look at his life (2 Cor. 7:11; 2 Thess. 3:13-15)

#### It destroys fleshly lusts to return the offender to the rule of Christ over his life (1 Cor. 5:1-5)

### Concerning the Church Body

#### It purifies the worship and message of the church (1 Cor. 5:6)

#### It denies Satan advantage or access into the church (2 Cor. 2:11)

#### It prevents God from setting Himself against the local church (Rev. 2:14-15)

### Concerning Individual Believers Not Living in Sin

#### It helps strengthen their faith by enabling them to maintain a clear conscience (1 Tim. 1:18-20)

#### It confirms their responsibility for others in the body (Heb. 3:13)

### Concerning the Authority Structures of the Body

#### It protects the Scriptures from perversion and error (Tit. 1:10-13)

#### It affirms obedience to God’s authority and leadership (2 Cor. 2:9)

#### It proves that the leadership loves and cares (2 Cor. 7:12)

## Sins Worthy of Discipline[[30]](#footnote-30)

### Private offenses that violate Christian love

#### “If your brother sins against you…” (Matt. 18:15; cf. 5:23-24)

#### Reject “hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage” (Gal. 5:19)

### Divisions that hinder Christian unity

#### “Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Rom. 16:17)

#### “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Tit. 3:10)

#### “You must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is… a slanderer… or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Cor. 5:11)

#### “… Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church” (3 John 9-10)

#### Reject “selfish ambition, dissensions, factions” (Gal. 5:20)

### Moral deviations that break Christian law

#### “You must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or … a drunkard” (1 Cor. 5:11)

#### “… We command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6)

#### Reject “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery” (Gal. 5:19)

#### “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11)

### Teaching doctrines that reject essential Christian truth

#### “You must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is… an idolater. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Cor. 5:11)

#### “… Encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced” (Tit. 1:9-11)

#### “…certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you… [who] are blemishes at your love feasts…” (Jude 4, 12)

## Tough Questions

### Should the church discipline those who attend but have not become members?

#### In every case the NT deals with discipline, it speaks of those who have professed belief in Christ. Until this step is taken, no one can really know the spiritual state of those who attend without ever becoming members.

#### Besides, if the line is not drawn at membership, then where would one draw the line—after a person attends a month? a year? a decade? Why?

### Should sinning members be disciplined even if they ask to be removed from the fellowship after they know the leaders are following the discipline process with them?

#### Discipline does not relinquish a member into the care of another church but actually removes the offender from the blessing of God by releasing him into Satan’s domain (1 Cor. 5:5). Thus, the process should be made official even if the offender does not wish it to become public (which offender would give his permission anyway?).

#### On the other hand, discipline is for those who claim to still be living for Christ and yet their lifestyle contradicts the gospel. If one does not even attend church, some may argue to privately strike their names from the role rather than publicly discipline them.

### When a church disciplines a member and that person joins a new church, should the first church contact the new church that does not know about the situation?

#### Ideally churches should always contact the former church of those transferring membership. We must accept only those in good standing.

#### However, when the new church does not take the initiative, the old church has a responsibility to inform the new church of the discipline action. This is because discipline does not relate only to a person’s relationship to a local church but to Christ’s authority over his/her life (Matt. 15:18-20).

### How long should the church discipline process take?

#### Scripture gives no guidelines but the Matthew 18 process certainly would take at least a few weeks or months if handled sensitively.

#### However, dragging the process along for years will enable the sin to afflict the rest of the body and will cause the body to lose respect for the leaders who are unwilling to act.

### How should the discipline of a leader be handled?

#### This is the time when the church leaders are most prone to favoritism due to the stature of the one who has fallen—but a different (lower) standard must never be applied as this is clear favoritism (1 Tim. 5:21).

#### Rather, Scripture mandates a higher standard. Elders who commit sins worthy of discipline should be publicly rebuked even if they repent during the private confrontation stage of the process (1 Tim. 5:20). Likewise, the church must openly and sharply rebuke public teachers of heresy to silence their ministry (Tit. 1:11, 13).

#### Those who ordained the errant elder should also publicly acknowledge their share in the leader’s sin (1 Tim. 5:22).

### Should a restored offender resume his position as an elder, pastor, or deacon—or would this man no longer be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2)?

#### Societal norms should dictate whether such a person could still be deemed “above reproach.” This literally means, “irreproachable” (BAGD 64b) in the sense that no one can point a finger at his character or behavior with an accurate accusation—not perfect, but having a good reputation.

#### Even if the restored offender resumes his position, this should not be done until enough years have passed to assure that the restoration is complete.

### How should family members respond to a believer under discipline? For example, the Bible says one should not even eat with a person disciplined (1 Cor. 5:11b). Does this mean that a person living in sin should not be welcomed to eat with the family in celebrations such as Christmas, Chinese New Year, birthdays, etc.?

## Summary

### The purpose of discipline is restoration—not simply punishment.

### Church discipline demonstrates love towards the person under restoration.

### Matthew 18:15-17 shows that the reason the church should restore a sinning Christian correctly is because this restoration is carried out as an extension of God’s authority.

### Since the church is Christ’s bride to be, she should be kept pure until the marriage (Rev. 19:7-8). This means that unrepentant sin that pollutes the body must be removed and offenders restored (1 Cor. 5:6).

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# Church Ordinances

## Nature of Ordinances

### What is a sacrament?

### What is an ordinance?

### What are the ordinances?

#### Baptism is a symbol of beginning the Christian life (Rom. 6).

#### The Lord’s Supper symbolizes continuing in the Christian life.

#### Is foot washing an ordinance? Why or why not?

## Baptism

### Backgrounds of Baptism

#### Baptism has *identification* as its basic meaning. Throughout history baptized persons identified with a particular religious community.

##### Old Testament

###### Baptism was not practiced in OT times as far as we can tell at present.

###### Although the word for “ritual washing” (*baptismos* baptismovς) sounds similar to that for “baptism” (*baptisma* bavptisma), these are very different. These ceremonial hand washings were very common in Christ’s day (Mark 7:3f.) but technically cannot be deemed baptism for two reasons:

These washings took place repeatedly.

They had no meaning of identification attached. Thus a different word is used to describe a different practice with a different meaning.

##### Intertestamental Era

###### Jewish self-immersion proselyte baptism began at some time between OT washings and the NT practice (Bruce, 156). This enabled Gentiles to publicly identify with the Jewish community as converts to Judaism.

###### As strange as it may seem to our ears today, in this practice the new member of the community would baptise himself/herself.

###### Besides baptism, proselytes to Judaism also needed to be circumcised and offer sacrifices. Baptism may have especially been employed for women since they could not be circumcised (“bavptw, baptivzw” by A. Oepke, *TDNT*, 1:535-36).

##### John the Baptist

###### John broke with the prevailing self-immersion practice since intertestamental times by acting as an agent of immersion as a sign of what God does for us when we repent (i.e., forgives us).

###### Thus John’s baptism was called a baptism of repentance, teaching that a person must first repent before being immersed (Matt. 3:1, 6, 8, 11).

##### Early Church

###### The first Christians continued the practice of baptising believers only, signifying their identification with the church as their new community. This is why the Greek noun *baptisma* (bavptisma, baptism) is specifically Christian, never used in other Greek literature before its NT occurrences (noted by Anglican vicar David Watson, *I Believe in the Church*, 227).

All subjects of baptism in the NT are clearly believers; one must have very good reason to deviate from this norm (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:14-15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). These texts show that repentance preceded baptism in a sequence of “hearing...believing...being baptized.”

Some have claimed that entire households were baptized in the NT, which almost certainly included infants (Acts 10:47-48; 16:15; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16). However, each of these household texts declare that the households *believed* before baptism; that infants were baptized is an assumption that is counter to the stated fact that people believed before baptism.

The earliest non-scriptural baptism instructions (AD 50-150)[[31]](#footnote-31) requires fasting of 1-2 days prior to baptism, thus implying only adult baptism (*Didache* 7:4 in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 153).

The Great Commission order is first to make disciples, *then* to baptise them (Matt. 28:19-20). So only believers were baptized, which excludes infants.

Baptism is a sign of the believer’s salvation (Rom. 6:1f.). It is not a sign of the covenant (contra infant view), for the Lord’s Supper is the sign of the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

###### NT baptism also seems to have been performed by immersion, in line with the practice inherited from John the Baptiser.

The lexical meaning of the only word used for NT baptism (baptivzw) means “dip, immerse…wash, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm… soak” (BAGD 131c).

Besides baptism, other literal uses include “to dip” (Luke 16:24; cf. LXX Judg. 2:14; Josh. 3:15; Lev. 4:6; 11:32) and “to dye” (Rev. 19:13).

Also, baptism is likened to the Flood (1 Pet. 3:21), which obviously used lots of water!

From the lexical data even Luther and Calvin both admitted immersion to be the biblical mode. When Luther translated the NT into German, he still believed in infant and sprinkling baptism. Due to these sensitivities, he did not translate baptivzw. Instead, he chose to transliterate it. Thus, it was not translated into the German equivalent of “to immerse”; rather, each Greek letter was Romanized to coin a new word, “baptism.” Since this time translations of the Bible into other languages have followed suit with a transliteration so that the meaning of the term has been obscured with various interpretations of what baptism really means. To find its real meaning, one must return to the Greek meaning. All Greek lexicons agree that it means to dip, soak, or immerse.

Immersion best signifies several truths:

Identification with Christ’s death and resurrection is clearly pictured by going under the water and out again (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12)

Subjection to Christ’s authority is shown by being totally overwhelmed by water (Matt. 28:18-19; Acts 19:3-5; 22:16)

Baptism’s pledge of a good conscience toward God is related to Christ’s resurrection, which is pictured in coming out of the water (1 Pet. 3:21)

Some cite verses with the claim that baptism by *pouring* is mentioned often in the NT (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 9:10; 10:22; Tit. 3:5). However, none of these verses refer to baptism and none refer to pouring. They refer in each case to *spiritual* cleansing from sin by faith in Christ (“washing”) or to *Jewish* ceremonial washings which were performed numerous times on the same persons (cf. Heb. 9:10). Hebrews 10:22 refers not to baptism but to “having our *hearts sprinkled* to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” Pouring is first stated in the early second century—and only as an exception when immersion in running water or cold water should/could not be used (*Didache* 7:1-3 in J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 153).

It is also claimed that baptism by *sprinkling* is mentioned often in the Bible (Exod. 24:6-8; Num. 8:7; Ezek. 36:24-26; Heb. 9:13-14; 10:22). Yet none of these verses refer to baptism. They refer to purifying priests with sprinkled water (Num. 8:7), sprinkling vessels with blood (Exod. 24:6-8; Heb. 9:13-14), or the saving work of the Spirit (Ezek. 36:24-26; Heb. 10:22).

All NT examples of baptism best allow for immersion: “plenty of water” (John 3:23), “coming up out of the water” (Mark 1:10), “went down into the water” (Acts 8:38). This last case concerns the Ethiopian eunuch who could have easily been baptized by pouring or sprinkling anywhere along the journey by using water in the caravan.

Some advocates of sprinkling or pouring suggest that 3000 new believers in Jerusalem could not have been immersed in a single day (Acts 2:41). But archaeological findings reveal the existence of many pools in Jerusalem. The Pool of Siloam, Bethesda Pool, Sheep Pool, and the Gihon Spring are just some that are known to us today.

#### Summary of Early Church Baptism vs. Baptisms Preceding It

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| --- | --- |
| **Contrasts**  (Preceding vs. NT/Christian) | **Comparisons**  (Points in Common) |
| No formula vs. “Father, Son, & Holy Spirit” | Signified identification with a religious community |
| Self-immersion vs. performed by another | Practiced only on believers |
| For Gentiles only vs. both Jews & Gentiles | Immersion only in both cases (BC & 1st century) |
| Circumcision prerequisite vs. none | Common in both instances |
| To Judaism vs. to Christianity/John | Water used |
| Immersion vs. mode varied (in 2nd century) |  |

### Views on Baptism

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| **Adherents** | Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, Anglican, Methodist, some Evangelical Free Church | Baptist, Bible, Brethren, Mennonite, Pentecostal, some Evangelical Free Church, most independent churches |
| **Purpose** | Three Views:  Catholic: Means of saving grace  *apart* fromthe faith of those baptized  (baptismal regeneration)  Lutheran: Means of saving grace  *assuming* faith by those baptized  (baptismal regeneration)  Others: *Not* a means of saving grace  but a seal and sign of the covenant | Unified View:  Baptism is a symbol of salvation: an outward sign of the inward reality of justification already received in Christ with no external efficacy (A. Oepke, “bapto, baptizo…” *TDNTabr.*, 93). |
| Supports for Above Stated Purpose: | Baptismal regeneration is taught in many verses (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).  (Baptismal regeneration is refuted by Ronald K. Y. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT, 173-74) | Baptism and salvation are indeed linked, but not directly so that baptism *causes* salvation. This would contradict the clear teaching of the NT that salvation is by faith alone (John 3:16; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9). In NT times, baptism most often occurred on the day of one’s conversion. This close association between salvation and baptism was viewed as a single event, yet baptism was not always commanded with conversion (Acts 3:19; 16:31). (Evaluation of each of these verses at the left is beyond the scope of this chart.) |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| Purpose  (continued) | Baptism is the sign of the covenant:  Col. 2:11-13 says, “In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ…”  It thus signifies the recipient’s initiation into the community of God. | The sign of the new covenant is not baptism but the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:25).  Colossians 2:11-13 associates baptism not with physical circumcision but with “spiritual” circumcision, or salvation.  Further, Scripture never connects water baptism with a covenant (e.g. the Abrahamic Covenant). The argument at the left is an argument from silence as Colossians mentions no covenant relating to baptism.  The NT never mentions a “covenant community” made up of believers and their unbelieving children.  For a summary of contrasts between baptism and circumcision, see after this chart. |
|  | Baptism is the seal of the covenant (Acts 15:1; 21:21; Gal. 2:3-5). | The verses at the left prove only that circumcision is not required in the present age; they say nothing about baptism.  The seal of the new covenant is not baptism but the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). |
|  | The central idea associated with baptism is purification from sin (Col. 2:11-12). | Baptism signifies forgiveness of sin but also identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-7). |
|  | Assigning to baptism only a symbolic purpose shows a low view of baptism in light of the many NT references. | This outward sign of an inward reality is supported in that all NT baptisms were performed on believers. To the contrary, to perform it only on Christians is to show a *high* view of baptism—especially since it is so often associated with salvation. The statement at the left assumes that a symbol cannot be important, but this is exactly what we have in the Lord’s Supper. |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| Purpose  (continued) | “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16) requires baptism for salvation (Catholic and Lutheran views but not Presbyterian) | The verse says nothing about those who *believe and are not baptized.* Yet Christ promised the repentant thief on the cross salvation without baptism (Luke 23:40-43). Persons are justified and forgiven at the point of saving faith, which always *precedes* believer’s baptism. |
| **Subjects** | Infants of Christian parents regardless of his/her personal belief can be baptized. Children and adults | Believers alone should be baptized, which excludes infants and the unsaved. |
| Support for Above Stated Subjects | Baptism is parallel to circumcision and circumcision was done to infants.  Therefore, baptism should be performed on infants as well. | The logic at the left is faulty in its first premise—that baptism and circumcision are parallel (see above under Col. 2:12). |
|  | Infant baptism more powerfully illustrates the grace of God. “How can the new covenant, which supersedes the old, exclude children when they are included in the old? Even animals are included in God’s covenant of redemption (Gen. 9:10), let alone children, who are definitely more precious to Him!” (“Position Paper on Baptism” by an SBC student, 1994).  Sally Kee, p. 3 | How is God’s grace towards a baby who has never consciously sinned *greater* than His grace towards one who has repeatedly rebelled against Him? Grace towards adults is the greater marvel. Children under the old covenant were not saved by circumcision but by faith (Gen. 15:5). Likewise, under the new covenant we are accepted by faith—not by baptism (Rom. 4:1-25). Besides, how is denying baptism for infants a sign of the priority of animals over humans? Since animals are not baptized, the comparison cannot be made. |
|  | Entire households were baptized in the NT, which almost certainly included infants (Acts 10:47-48; 16:15; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16). Certainly households of wealthy persons such as Cornelius and Lydia had children, babies, slaves, children of slaves, and servants. | Each of the household texts declares that the households *believed* before baptism. That infants were baptized is an assumption counter to the stated fact that people believed before baptism. Given the older age of Cornelius who had been a soldier for many years before reaching this high rank, it is more likely that his children were old enough to believe rather than being infants. Lydia’s wealth as an established businesswoman also argues for her children being older. |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| Subjects  (continued) | Infant baptism has been practiced throughout the history of the church from the earliest times. Church Fathers such as Ireneaus (AD 130-202), Tertullian (AD 150-220), and Justin Martyr (AD 155) all spoke of infant baptism, so they must have received this tradition from the apostles. | None of the authors at the left lived in the first century, so their teaching does not necessarily advocate longstanding tradition. In contrast, the *Didach*e, which has earliest non-scriptural Christian instructions (AD 50-150) required fasting of 1-2 days prior to baptism, thus implying only adult baptism (*Didache* 7:4 in J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 153). The universal first-century belief in believer’s baptism became diluted in segments of the church sometime in the second century (noted at the left). |
|  | Christ blessed little children—probably even infants (Mark 10:13-16); this indicates His approval to baptise them. | Blessing children and baptising them are wholly different. The argument at the left is valid only if the NT shows Christ baptising children, which it does not. |
|  | Infant baptism is not prohibited in the NT and therefore is allowed. | Silence does not necessarily argue for approval (e.g., we cannot argue for baptism of the dead simply because the NT does not prohibit it). NT support for believer’s baptism automatically prohibits infant baptism since infants cannot believe. |
|  |  | The order in the Great Commission is first to make disciples, *then* to baptise them (Matt. 28:19-20). Thus only believers are to be baptized, which excludes infants. |
|  |  | Baptism points *back* to the believer’s becoming united with Christ in His death (Rom. 6:1-11); this cannot be said of infants who have yet to believe. |
|  |  | All subjects of baptism in the NT are clearly believers; one must have very good reason to deviate from this norm (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:14-15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). These texts show that repentance preceded baptism in a sequence of “hearing...believing...being baptized.” |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| **Mode** | Scripture does not specify any particular mode of baptism, thus allowing both sprinkling and pouring. It is not *method* that counts, but the *sincerity* of the one baptized. | The only scriptural mode is immersion, so how can we say mode is unimportant? While it is true that mode is less important than heart attitude, this does not then imply that mode is irrelevant. |
| Support for Above Stated Mode | Baptism by pouring has been practised throughout the history of the church from earliest times. | Pouring is first stated in the early second century—and only as an exception when immersion in running water or cold water should/could not be used (*Didache* 7:1-3 in J. B. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, 153). |
|  | Baptism by *pouring* is mentioned often in the NT (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 9:10; 10:22; Tit. 3:5). | None of these verses refer to baptism and none refer to pouring. They refer in each case to *spiritual* cleansing from sin by faith in Christ (“washing”) or to *Jewish* ceremonial washings which were performed numerous times on the same persons (cf. Heb. 9:10). Hebrews 10:22 refers not to baptism but to “having our *hearts sprinkled* to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” |
|  | Pouring best represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers (Matt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; 2:3). | While *implied* similarities exist between baptism by pouring and the outpouring of the Spirit, the *explicit* symbolism in the NT is that baptism represents the believer’s dying to his old life and rising to a new one (Rom. 6:1ff.). Thus immersion is the explicit mode in the NT and pouring can be argued only by implication. |
|  | Baptism by *sprinkling* is mentioned often in the Bible (Exod. 24:6-8; Num. 8:7; Ezek. 36:24-26; Heb. 9:13-14; 10:22). | None of these verses refer to baptism. They refer to purifying priests with sprinkled water (Num. 8:7), sprinkling vessels with blood (Exod. 24:6-8; Heb. 9:13-14), or the saving work of the Spirit (Ezek. 36:24-26; Heb. 10:22). |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| Mode  (continued) | Practically speaking, Peter could not have immersed 3000 in a single day on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). This baptism must have been by sprinkling or by pouring. | One wonders if he could have sprinkled or poured upon that many either, but the text does not say Peter did the baptising. If one could immerse 100 people per hour (a distinct possibility), the 120 disciples there (Acts 1:15) could have immersed 12,000 in a single hour! Even if only the 12 baptized it would take less than three hours to baptise the 3000 (12 x 100 = 1200/hour). |
|  | The Philippian jailer would not have left his post for immersion, but could have momentarily for pouring or sprinkling (Acts 16:33b). | The text says he took time to listen to Paul’s preaching (v. 32) and to wash Paul and Silas’ wounds (v. 33a), which may have taken just as long. He obviously left his post to invite Paul and Silas to his home for a midnight meal (v. 34). Baptism takes less time than eating a full meal. The argument at the left also assumes That he guarded the jail alone and could not have delegated his responsibilities to others. |
|  | Lexical meanings are not sufficient to establish theology. | The lexical meaning of the only word used for NT baptism (baptivzw) means “dip, immerse…wash, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm…soak” (BAGD 131c). Besides baptism, other literal uses include “to dip” (Luke 16:24; cf. LXX Judg. 2:14; Josh. 3:15; Lev. 4:6; 11:32) and “to dye” (Rev. 19:13). Also, baptism is likened to the Flood (1 Pet. 3:21). From the lexical data even Luther and Calvin both believed immersion to be the biblical mode. |
|  | Since sprinkling was practiced in the OT, John the Baptist probably sprinkled as well—especially since he was a Levite (Luke 1:5). | John the Baptist performed his baptisms in the Jordan River. Would sprinkling have required people to walk into the water with John? Besides, the type of baptism immediately preceding John’s historically was Jewish proselyte immersion (see next box below). |

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|  | **Infant** | **Believer’s** |
| Mode  (continued) | Baptisms preceding Christianity do not absolutely establish that Christian baptism followed the same pattern. | baptivzw (immersion) is used not only of NT baptism, but also of Jewish ritual washings (Mark 7:4; Luke 11:38), which were by immersion. Both pagan religious washings and Jewish proselyte baptism preceded Christian baptism, the later being by self-immersion (A. Oepke, “bapto, baptizo…” *TDNTabr.*, 92-93). |
|  | Sprinkling and pouring also have OT and NT parallels (see above). | Immersion best signifies:  • identification with Christ’s death and  resurrection by going under the water and  out again (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12)  • subjection to Christ’s authority (Matt.  28:18-19; Acts 19:3-5; 22:16)  • obedience and a good conscience before  God (1 Pet. 3:2). |
|  | Baptism preceded the writing of Romans, so the immersion portrayed in Romans 6 could have been new. (No evidence prior to Romans indicates that baptism signified Christ’s death and resurrection.) | Only six NT books were written before Romans, so Romans was among the first NT books to be written (AD 56-57). Among these letters are Galatians and 1 Corinthians, neither of which predated Romans by more than seven years. |
|  | The passages at the right argue only that baptism took place in water, but this still could have been by pouring or sprinkling while standing in the water. | All NT examples of baptism best allow for immersion: “*plenty* of water” (John 3:23), “coming *up* *out of* the water” (Mark 1:10), “went *down into* the water” (Acts 8:38). This last case concerns the Ethiopian eunuch who could have easily been baptized by pouring or sprinkling anywhere along the journey by using water in the caravan. What purpose would entering water waist high for pouring serve? |

### Circumcision and Baptism Contrasted

Both baptism and circumcision share some common elements. Both are rites. God commanded both at certain times of redemptive history. Both symbolized the participant identifying with the covenant community. Yet there exist some notable differences between the two as well which makes it doubtful that God designed the baptism of children to replace the circumcision of children in the OT era.

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Circumcision** | **Baptism** |
|  |  |  |
| *Sex of Participants* | Males only (Gen. 17:10) | Males and females |
| *Requirement* | Physical life (and belief of parents in the case of children) | Spiritual life (personal faith in Christ by the one being baptized) |
| *Subjects* | All in the Israelite covenant community, irrespective of age (Gen. 17:10-13) | Only those within the community who were old enough to consciously trust in Christ |
| *Time Administered* | Eighth day after birth (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3; Phil. 3:5) | No command tells when baptism is to be done, except that the NT pattern is that it always *followed* salvation |
| *Signified* | External birth into the community of faith in Yahweh | Internal (new) birth into the universal body of Christ |
| *NT parallel to the OT rite* | The NT parallel to OT rite is circumcision of the heart, the “circumcision done by Christ” (Col. 2:11)—not water baptism | Baptism has no OT parallel |
|  |  |  |

### Questions About Baptism

#### Should baptism be required of those who take the Lord’s Supper?

##### Response: The issue here is whether a person can take the Lord’s Supper in a “worthy manner” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32) without baptism.

##### Since baptism is one of the first signs of obedience after salvation, it seems that one who resists baptism also resists Christ. Baptism was required of those taking the Lord’s Supper from the late first century or early second century (*Didache* 10:5 in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 154).

#### Should those who were baptized *as infants* later be rebaptized following confession of salvation?

##### Response: The difference between infant baptism and adult baptism relates to more than simply the *time* of baptism. The whole *purpose* of baptism differs significantly in these two types of baptism. Infant baptism signifies the recipient’s initiation into the community of God (Presbyterian view) and even serves as a means of saving grace in the Catholic and Lutheran views.

##### However, as Scripture relates to baptism a symbolic purpose of looking back at one’s salvation, it would seem that one who has been saved would welcome the opportunity to testify to his or her salvation through a rebaptism.

#### Should those baptized by sprinkling *as believing adults* be rebaptized by immersion once they see the biblical support for immersion?

##### Response: Many Baptist churches will not admit persons for membership who have not been immersed after placing their faith in Christ, even if they have been sprinkled following salvation. This is not as serious of an issue as question #2 above, but it is more difficult to answer!

##### Perhaps Acts 19:1-7 can be instructive here. In this passage Paul visited Ephesus and found twelve “disciples” (v. 1) of Jesus, though only through John the Baptist. John had baptized these believers because of their repentance from their sin in anticipation of the Messiah. However, for whatever reason, these people were unlike those of John’s disciples who eventually met and followed Christ. Since they had a baptism under John that was incomplete in picturing their faith in Christ, Paul rebaptized them in the Christian manner (presumably immersion). Paul felt it important that their baptism accurately picture their faith in Christ.

##### The Acts 19 situation did not concern *sprinkling* supplemented by immersion as in the question above. It is not presumptuous to think that John’s baptisms were by immersion since he performed them in the Jordan River and since the Jewish proselyte baptism that preceded him was also by immersion. Certainly if Paul felt it necessary to supplement one form of immersion (John’s baptism of repentance) with another form of immersion (Christian baptism), it would be appropriate to supplement post-conversion sprinkling with post-conversion immersion. As in question “b” above, this ceremony gives believers another opportunity and privilege to testify of their faith in Christ.

### Applications

#### Have you been baptized in the biblical manner? If not, why not? Is this an excuse that honours the Lord?

#### Do you know any unbaptized Christian who needs to understand this teaching? How can you help this person?

## Lord’s Supper

### Backgrounds of the Lord’s Supper

#### Eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord

##### Adam and Eve ate every meal in the presence of God.

##### Once the leaders at the giving of the Ten Commandments ate and drank (Exod. 24:9-11).

##### Annually everyone presented their tithes at the temple with eating and drinking (Deut. 14:23, 26).

##### Eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord will happen in the future at the wedding of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

#### Jewish Passover (OT and NT)

##### There exist over 1200 versions of this celebration, making it difficult to explain fully! But in its basic form, the meal reminded Jews annually of their release (exodus) from Egyptian bondage by the death angel who “passed over” (thus the name) the houses of Jews who applied their lamb’s blood on the doors of their homes. Those who did not suffered the death of their firstborn son (Exod. 12).

##### Passover is not a community (synagogue or temple) commemoration but a family one (in contrast to the Christian Lord’s Supper). However, associated with Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread that was communal as the men went up to Jerusalem (Exod. 23:14-15).

##### Passover also has a future element, for it looks forward to the messianic age in which Messiah has returned and rules the world from Jerusalem. This is reflected in the close of each celebration with a statement such as…

“This year we are here. Next year in Jerusalem (or ‘in the land of Israel’)!

This year we are slaves. Next year free men!”

#### The Agape (Love) Feast was referred to as the “breaking of bread” among the early Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42). This was essentially a church potluck in which each family brings food to share with others (1 Cor. 11:17-22, 33-34). The Lord’s Supper would then be separate and possibly added on at the end (vv. 23-32; cf. David Watson, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 237).

#### The Meaning of the New Testament Lord’s Supper

##### Christ initiated the Lord’s Supper the night before He died as the sign of the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25) noted often in the OT (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 16:60-62). This covenant promises Israel and Judah (v. 31) a still future national and spiritual redemption (when “they will all know me,” v. 34), but certain elements have present application to the church as well:

###### indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jer. 31:33 with Ezek. 36:27)

###### new nature, heart, and mind (Jer. 31:33; Isa. 59:21)

###### forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:34b)

##### The Lord’s Supper shares much in common with the Passover as well. After all, it was during this celebration that Christ announced the Lord’s Supper for the first time. Both commemorations call participants to look in five directions (adapted from David Watson, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Look** | ***Passover***  ***(Jewish)*** | ***Lord’s Supper***  ***(Christian)*** |
| Upward | Faith of blood on doorframe  (Exod. 12:7) | Faith in Christ’s blood  (John 6:53-57) |
| Back | Deliverance from Egypt  (Exod. 12:31-42) | Deliverance from sin  (1 Cor. 11:23-25) |
| Forward | Wait for messianic age  (Ezek. 45:21) | Anticipate return of Christ  (1 Cor. 11:26; Mark 14:25) |
| Outward | Whole family involved  (Exod. 12:3-4, 16) | Fellowship and unity  (1 Cor. 11:17-22; 10:16-17) |
| Inward | Purify house of leaven/evil  (Exod. 12:8, 15) | Examine sin in yourself  (1 Cor. 11:27-32; cf. 5:6-8) |

##### Other parallels between the Lord’s Supper and the Passover continue…

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Passover (Jewish)** | **Lord’s Supper (Christian)** |
| Sorrow under… | Pharaoh | Sin (1 Cor. 11:27-32) |
| Symbols of breaking from sin | Unleavened bread symbolizes breaking from the evil in Egypt | Bread symbolizes our freedom from sin in a unified community (1 Cor. 5:6-8; 10:16) |
| Redemption in… | Passover lamb | Christ’s death (1 Cor. 5:7b) |

##### Although the order of the Passover revolved around four different cups (based on Exod. 6:6-7), the order of the two celebrations also have many similarities. Note below how Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper by changing the normal wording by applying the meaning of the elements to Himself.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Passover** | **Lord’s Supper** |
| Search for Unleavened Bread |  |
| Light candles by woman of the house and citation of blessing | Assumed (not recorded) |
| 1st Cup: Blessing/Sanctification, saying, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (1st of 4 “I wills” of Exod. 6:6-7) | “Take this and divide it among yourselves… I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22:17b-18) |
| Washing of one’s *own hands* | Washed *disciples feet* during meal (John 13:2, 4) |
| Parsley dipped in salt water (bitterness), middle matzah (bread) made visible and broken and 1/2 called “afikomen” (Gr. “he who comes later”) wrapped with napkin and hidden | Son of God (second member of the Trinity) made visible, broken, body wrapped, and buried in a tomb (this tradition was added to the Passover by first century AD Jewish believers) |
| Passover story read (Exod. 12:1-13),  Questions, 4 sons, 10 Plagues | Assumed (not recorded) |
| 2nd Cup: Plagues/Judgment, saying, “I will rid you of their bondage” |  |
| Washing hands, eat upper and 1/2 middle matzah and bitter herbs with bottom matzah (bondage) |  |
| Passover Supper begins |  |
| Eat bitter herbs with *charoseth* of dates, honey, & almonds (sweetness of life with God’s redemption), roasted egg (temple offerings & destruction, grief and new life), shankbone | Jesus dips the sop with Judas and Judas leaves (?) |
| Eat afikomen—“This is the bread of affliction…” | “This is my body…” (Luke 22:19) |
| 3rd Cup: Redemption, saying, “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm” | “This is my blood…” (Luke 22:20)  Jesus dips the sop with Judas and Judas leaves (?) |
| 4th Cup: Praise/Regathering, saying, “I will take you to me for a people” & read Pss. 113–118 | “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” |
| Declaration (“Next year in Jerusalem!”), hymn (Ps. 118), poem, or national anthem | Sang hymn & went to Mt. of Olives (Matt. 26:30) |
| Cup of Elijah: Filled but untouched; symbolizes his return before Messiah (Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 11:13-14; 17:11-12; Rev. 11:3-12; 19:11-21), youngest child opens front door “for Elijah” | Assumed (not recorded) |

### Views on Christ’s Presence in the Lord’s Supper[[32]](#footnote-32)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Catholic** | **Lutheran** | **Symbolic** |
| Transubstantiation | Consubstantiation or  Real Presence | Representative |
| The bread and wine *actually become* the body and blood of Christ when the priest says, “This is my body” | The body of Christ is *in, with, and under* the bread (similar to water in, with, and under a sponge) | The bread and wine *symbolize* the body and blood of Christ as a visible sign of Christ’s presence |
| Ludwig Ott | Martin Luther | John Calvin & Reformers |
| Christ is sacrificed in a real sense at each mass (though not the same as on the cross) | “Of the Supper of the Lord it is taught among us that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine, and are distributed to those who eat of the Supper of the Lord” (Augsburg Confession, Article X) | Christ is *spiritually present* is a special way as partakers symbolize his body and blood in the Supper |
| Grace is dispensed by the work performed to participants in proportion to their subjective disposition | Grace is conferred to believers as the bread actually contains Christ’s body | Believers who partake of these symbols experience God’s grace anew as they reflect on their salvation |
| Participants generally take only the bread so that Christ’s blood may not be spilled (though since the 1962-1965 Vatican II Council the wine has been also allowed) | Participants take both the bread and cup | Participants take both the bread and cup |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Catholic** | **Lutheran** | **Symbolic** |
| Support Cited:  A literal understanding of “This is my body” would mean that the bread actually is the flesh of Christ | Support Cited:  “And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16)  Christ as the lamb of God cannot be | Support Cited:  • Jesus is always present when believers gather in His name since each is a temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) |
| Weaknesses:  • Christ often spoke of Himself in a symbolic way:  –“I am the vine” (John 15:1)  –“I am the door” (John 10:9)  –“I am the bread” (John 6:41)  • The bread was in His hand and thus distinct from Him  • “This cup… is the new covenant…” (Luke 22:20) meant it *represented* the new covenant in a *symbolic* way  • Christ’s sacrifice is complete and need not be re-offered (Heb. 9:25-28; cf. John 19:30; Heb. 1:3)  • All believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:9) and thus can lead in the Supper  • Christ commands *all* Christians to drink the cup (1 Cor. 11:25; cf. Matt. 26:27) | Weaknesses:  • The first three weaknesses of the Catholic view at the left apply here as well  • How could Christ’s physical body be present everywhere the Supper is provided? He is no longer in the world as He has ascended to heaven (John 16:28; 17:11)  • Luther really makes Christ’s words to mean, “This [bread] accompanies my body” (Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 653). Yet Jesus spoke of bread in literal, physical terms but explained it is terms of spiritual reality (John 6:27-59) | Weaknesses:  • Since Christ is omnipresent and has promised never to leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5), just how he is present at the Lord’s Supper is a mystery |

### Who Should Participate in the Lord’s Supper?

#### Should only Christians participate in Lord’s Supper?

##### The issue here is whether a person can take the Lord’s Supper in a “worthy manner” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32) without knowing Christ personally.

##### The Church of England has recently decided that if children can be baptized, then they should also be allowed to take the Lord’s Supper. This seems to be good reasoning to me, provided that Scripture allows infant baptism. I do not have a problem with *children—*for they certainly can trust Christ and be baptized. Some churches will not baptise children and thus also not allow them to take the Lord’s Supper until they are 12 years old, presumably arguing this from the Jewish bar-mitzvah at 12-13 years old. Yet this practice argues for a Christian tradition based on a Jewish tradition, neither of which finds scriptural support!

#### Should baptism be required of those who take the Lord’s Supper?

##### The issue here is whether a person can take the Lord’s Supper in a “worthy manner” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32) without baptism.

##### Grudem allows unbaptized believers to take the Lord’s Supper (p. 996):

A different problem arises if someone who is a genuine believer, but not baptized, is *not* allowed to participate in the Lord’s Supper when Christians get together. In that case the person’s nonparticipation symbolizes that he or she is *not* a member of the body of Christ which is coming together to observe the Lord’s Supper in a unified fellowship (see 1 Cor. 10:17: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”). Therefore churches may think it best to allow non-baptized believers to participate in the Lord’s Supper but to urge them to be baptized as soon as possible. For if they are willing to participate in one outward symbol of being a Christian, there seems no reason why they should not be willing to participate in the other, a symbol that appropriately comes first.

##### However, the best arguments require baptism of those taking the Lord’s Supper:

###### Taking part in the Lord’s Supper does not simply represent being “member of the body of Christ” as Grudem claims. It is deeper than that. It is reserved for the person who is a “member of the body of Christ *in good standing with God and man.”* This is the whole point of 1 Corinthians 11 since the church members were all baptized (12:13) and yet totally out of fellowship.

###### Since baptism is one of the first signs of obedience after salvation, it seems that one who resists baptism also resists Christ. Grudem himself admits that baptism is “a symbol that appropriately comes first.” Since this is so, why shouldn’t churches keep first things first?

###### If churches distribute the Lord’s Supper to unbaptized Christians, this will also take away the incentive for them to be baptized. Granting them the Lord’s Supper makes it difficult to “urge them to be baptized as soon as possible,” as Grudem admits should be priority.

###### Baptism was required of those taking the Lord’s Supper from the late first century or early second century (*Didache* 10:5 in J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 154). While this early church practice does not determine our practice today, it should not be easily dismissed since it comes from those trained by the apostles themselves.

#### What is meant by self-examination to prevent eating and drinking “in an unworthy manner” (1 Cor. 11:27)?

##### Some teach that unworthy participation means a failure to understand the true nature of the bread and cup representing the Lord’s body and blood. However, this concept is related to eating and drinking “without discerning the body” (1 Cor. 11:29)—not “without discerning the body and the blood.” Also, “let him examine himself” refers not to examining his understanding of the nature of the elements but rather to being in a right relationship with others in the body (cf. Grudem, 997, n. 15).

##### The context of 1 Corinthians 11 reveals that the immediate practice (manner) that was so unworthy related to the church relationships in the body: drunkenness, hoarding food, etc. (11:21).

#### Should a person take part in the Lord’s Supper if he is out of fellowship with another member of the body of Christ?

##### Here is the very area that most closely approximates the Corinthian situation. Paul told them that since they were not in harmony with one another, they had not examined themselves. We, too, should not take part when we are out of fellowship with another believer.

##### Sometimes believers think it unspiritual to let the bread and cup pass. Actually, the opposite is unspiritual—when we are out of fellowship with God or man, we do harm to ourselves by participating in the Lord’s Supper! Some Corinthians had become sick and some even died by abusing this principle (11:29-30).

##### Jesus also underscored the indispensable part relationships play in approaching God in worship (which would include the Lord’s Supper):

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matt. 5:23-24).

##### However, sometimes we have done all we could to be reconciled with an offended party. In such cases, Romans 12:18 instructs us, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” If we confess our sin to another believer but are not granted forgiveness, then we have done our part to be at peace. In such cases it seems to me that we are free to participate once again at the Lord’s table.

Summary: Those who take the Lord’s Supper should be baptized Christians who have examined themselves to assure that they are right with both God and man.

#### Who Should Lead in the Lord’s Supper?

##### Many churches (e.g., Presbyterian) require the person leading the Lord’s Supper to be “ordained.”

##### However, Scripture does not address either of these issues: ordination (in the manner in which it is currently practiced) or leading the Supper. Thus it becomes a matter in which believers may practice as they wish (cf. Rom. 14).

#### Should the leaders examine those participating in the Lord’s Supper?

##### No. Scripture indicates that each man is to examine himself (1 Cor. 11:28). If the ecclesiastical structure determines whom is “clean enough” to partake, this will eventually lead to legalism and inconsistency (Catholics withhold the mass from divorcees but give it to murderers). The NT assumes that ministry of the Holy Spirit is competent enough to convict believers of sin without the authority structures getting involved.

##### An exception to the above is when a person in the church is under discipline. Since this person should be treated as a non-Christian (“tax collector and sinner,” Matt. 18:17), this would certainly include withholding the Lord’s table until repentance and restoration occur.

#### How often should churches take the Lord’s Supper?

##### The NT gives no guidelines. Jesus only said, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup…” (1 Cor. 11:26).

##### Practices differ in terms of frequency of this practice. Until the Reformation, most churches celebrated the Lord’s table weekly, as do some today (e.g., Brethren). Others practice it the first Sunday of each month (many Baptists) and Reformed churches typically take communion quarterly.

#### Which of these teachings on the Lord’s Supper will you apply?

##### How can you take the Lord’s Supper in a worthier manner?

##### Do you stop to evaluate yourself as a regular habit before partaking of the elements? How can you better do this?

##### Are you in a right relationship with all members of the body so that participation is possible at the next occurrence? With whom do you need to reconcile before taking the Lord’s Supper again?

# Church Edification

## Spiritual Gifts

(Note that I have an entire course on this issue and Pneumatology. For details see the “Spiritual Gifts” book of notes.)

### Purposes

### Lists

### Definitions

### Discovery

## Small Groups

### Observations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Occurrences in Acts** | **Patterns** |
| Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. | Small groups met regularly for instruction, fellowship, meals, and prayer. |
| Acts 5:42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. | House group teaching was a daily practice. |
| Acts 20:20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. | The Ephesian church had many house meetings . |
| Acts 28:30-31 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ. | Even under house arrest, Paul used the natural venue of his rented home for teaching and evangelism. |

### Functions

#### Intimacy

#### Accountability

#### Encouragement

### Guidelines

#### Design church forms that narrow involvement down to the individual level.

One-to-one

Small groups

Church-wide celebration

#### Apply the NT “one another” principles (look this phrase up in the NT and do your own individual study here).

#### Involve the whole group

Paste “Working with People in Groups” Here (HTSTB, 58)

# Church Multiplication

## Biblical Basis for Multiplication

### The Great Commissions

#### Matthew

#### Mark

#### Luke

#### John

#### Acts

### Principles of Evangelism (BEE, 151)

#### Evangelism is Active: It occurs from believers going to nonbelievers rather than simply waiting for them to ask (Mark 16:15).

#### Love for other Christians in a unified body is one of the most powerful ways to show the world that we are Christ’s followers (John 13:24-25).

#### Share Christ in ever-increasing spheres of influence, starting at home in your own culture and working outwards (Acts 1:8).

#### Evangelism should be non-discriminating so that it reaches all people—Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, male and female, etc. (Acts 11:19-21).

#### God and angels don’t evangelize: People can’t believe without a human messenger sent to share this good news with them (Rom. 10:14-15).

#### Evangelism essentially involves reconciling enemies (God and man) to the extent that people become new people altogether (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

#### True faith is contagious and becomes well known in areas where the evangelist doesn’t even live (1 Thess. 1:8).

#### All believers are responsible to share their faith, despite their gift (2 Tim. 4:5).

#### We should always live in defense of our faith (1 Pet. 3:15).

#### Evangelism is not trying to convince a God who is reluctant to save but rather to join with God who wants all to repent (2 Pet. 3:9).

## Practical Strategy for Evangelism

### Unreached Groups in my Area

### Plan to Reach These Groups

# Implementing Change

## Importance of Change

## Principles for Making Changes

## Your Strategy for Change

### What changes are most necessary in your own church?

### What is your strategy to implement change in one key area?

# Church Unity

## Essential Doctrines for Unity

*Which doctrines must believers agree upon to serve together?*

## Denominations

*Is it wrong for the Christian church to have different denominations? Why or why not?*

## Separation

### Definitions

#### Biblical separation is “the separation of the church and its members from unbelief, apostasy, and compromise.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

#### Primary separation prohibits association with believers with whom one disagrees.

#### Secondary separation prohibits association with believers who agree with the first party but they themselves associate with others with whom the first party disagrees. The Bible-Presbyterian Church holds to this form of separation. See Jeffery Khoo’s work on this subject.

### Passages and Issues

#### What does 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 mean?

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

#### What do the following texts teach about separation?[[34]](#footnote-34)

##### 2 Thess. 3:6-15

##### Romans 12:1-2

##### Romans 16:17

##### Ephesians 5:11

##### 1 Thess. 5:21-22

##### 1 Tim. 6:3-5

##### 2 Tim. 2:16-21

##### Titus 3:10

##### 2 John 7-11

##### Jude 3

##### Revelation 18:4

#### Over which issues should believers separate from unbelievers? (For example, could believers rally together with non-Christians to support issues such as racial harmony, prohibition of abortion, etc.?)

“The direct commands to *separate* from other people are always commands to separate *from unbelievers*, not from Christians with whom one disagrees… The are no direct New Testament commands to separate from Christians with whom one has doctrinal differences (unless those differences involve such serious heresies that the Christian faith itself is denied).”

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 877

#### Primary Separation: Over which issues should believers separate from other believers?

#### Secondary Separation: Over which issues should believers separate from believers who do not practice primary separation?

# The Role of Women in the Church

## Reconciling Paul in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy 2

**Introduction**

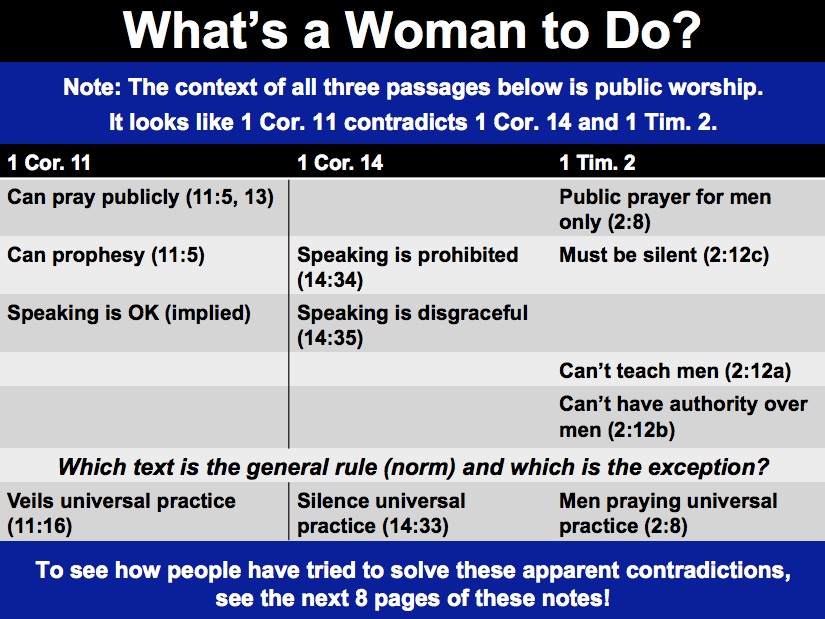
Years ago my wife and I visited an Evangelical Free Church. The adult Sunday school class of several men and women greeted us warmly, then we sat in the front row. Then the song leader informed us all that the regular teacher was not able to make it, so a very qualified substitute teacher had come instead. After a very impressive introduction to this teacher named “Gene,” the teacher turned the pulpit over to the speaker. When the teacher came forward I soon saw that the one I thought had been a “Gene” actually was a “Jean”! She did an excellent job preaching to the class, but I still had some lingering questions…

A young woman became a good friend of mine one summer while we traveled together in America and Europe with a Christian music group called the Continentals. Over the years after that summer Joan and I corresponded with one another. One day I noticed that the return address on her letter was from Berkeley, California. To my amazement, her remarks inside the letter revealed that she was attending the American Baptist Seminary to become a pastor of a church. “Rev. Joan” has been ordained now for many years.

The role of women in the church has been debated much the past 50 years in response to the emphasis on the equality of men and women. Many denominations now ordain women into ministry and within most churches women enjoy a freedom to minister that was suppressed for centuries. I believe that this debate is generally good, for it has forced evangelicals to return to the Scriptures for answers.

However, this controversy has at least two problems. The first problem is that for many Christians the biblical teaching on the matter has taken a back seat to pragmatism and the world's philosophies. The second problem is that even when one does turn to the Scripture, some apparent contradictions on the role of women cause believers to be confused regarding whether God has a definitive answer on the issue. Since the Bible itself is the only reliable authority for faith and practice, this study will evaluate these passages in an attempt to clear up some of the confusion.

**Problem Passages on the Role of Women**



A glance at the key NT passages on the role of women in the church can at first seem irreconcilable. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul allows women to publicly pray and prophesy in church. However, three chapters later he commands women to remain silent in the churches (1 Cor. 14:34). How can we reconcile these two passages? Then in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul confounds us more by asserting that women should receive instruction with submissiveness, not teaching or exercising authority over men. Therefore, in the first text women are to speak publicly, in the second they are to say nothing at all, and in the third they are to remain quiet (but not necessarily silent). How can Paul's teaching on this important subject be harmonized?

**Various Attempts to Harmonize Paul's Teaching**

The three passages mentioned above have been explained in several different ways:

1) Paul changed his mind between 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 14 (with 1 Timothy 2:11-12), withdrawing the former passage's allowance of public prayer and prophecy.1

Response: A fickle apostle can hardly be described as under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

2) The 1 Corinthians 14 prohibition refers to teaching with an authoritative direction for the church but the other two texts allow prayer and prophesy as part of their regular ministry.2

Response: The three passages do not have distinctions on the amount of authority inherent in each situation. Also, why would not a “regular ministry” be considered authoritative?

3) Women are allowed to pray and prophesy in general (1 Cor. 11) but the prohibitions are designed to discourage hysterical outbursts (1 Cor. 14:33, 40)3 and to maintain the doctrinal integrity of the church by not allowing any uninstructed persons to teach in the body (1 Tim. 2:11).4 Therefore, the latter two passages are not applicable today except in situations concerning unruly conduct and false teaching.

Response: Hysterical outbursts are not noted in 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40 and 1 Timothy 2 does not indicate that women are to refrain from teaching because they are not as well instructed. It refers back to the creation account as evidence for woman's subordination.

4) Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 2:12 is best translated “I am not presently permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over men…” with the meaning that “the verb tense cannot be made necessarily into a general principle for all time” and the infinitive “to have authority” is literally “to domineer.”5 The “silence” of 1 Corinthians 14:34 is qualified in that it relates only to questions which women are to reserve for their husbands at home (v. 35) and whatever praying or prophesying they do must be done under the inspiration of the Spirit (1 Cor. 11:5).6 Therefore, women can pray and prophesy today.

Response: To claim that Paul's use of the present tense meant that the practice was limited to his own time is only speculation. It more likely means that this was his normal practice, especially in view of his appeal to the creation account for support (1 Tim 2:13ff.). Also, the Greek word *authenteo*, “to exercise authority,” does not necessarily have a negative connotation such as is true of “to domineer.”

5) Paul did not actually make the statement in 1 Corinthians 14:34 which advocates that women be silent in the church since this was added sometime later by someone seeking to conform the church to a more traditional, “Jewish” position.7 Also, he did not author the 1 Timothy passage.8 This leaves only the 1 Corinthians 11 passage as authentic.

Response: No textual support exists to question the authenticity of either of these passages.

6) Women praying and prophesying is allowed in 1 Corinthians 11, but 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 prohibit women from teaching men.9 Therefore, the latter two passages do not limit women in public prayer and prophesying.

Response: Teaching is not the subject addressed in 1 Corinthians 14. The context concerns prophecy and tongues. Also, one should wonder why prophesying would be allowed but teaching excluded. Finally, public prayer for women is prohibited by 1 Timothy 2:8.

7) Women are not allowed to speak publicly in church (1 Cor. 14:34), which includes teaching men (1 Tim 2:12). The 1 Corinthians 11 permission to pray and prophesy is only hypothetical since “we are not sure whether St. Paul contemplated the *possibility* of women prophesying in exceptional cases.”10

Response: It makes little sense that Paul would devote half a chapter to a situation that was not actually occurring. The rest of the epistle addresses actual problems, not hypothetical ones. Also, Paul does not prohibit the practice of women praying and prophesying.

8) Women cannot judge prophets in 1 Corinthians 14 which is a completely different situation than their permission to pray or to prophesy in the church according to 1 Corinthians 11.11

Response: 1 Corinthians 14 limits women from speaking with authority in the church, not simply judging prophets. Otherwise we would expect Paul to use the verb “to judge” rather than “to speak.”

9) The prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 that prohibit speaking and teaching men apply only to married women whose husbands were present in the assembly whereas 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 applies to all other women.12

Response: Although these first two texts may apply to married women in particular, nothing in 1 Corinthians 11 suggests that it is limited to single women and women with unsaved husbands.

10) 1 Corinthians 11 has informal meetings in view (e.g., mid-week prayer meetings, etc.) but 1 Corinthians 14 refers to the more formal Sunday worship service. 13

Response: Formal/informal contrasts are forced since church worship took place in homes anyway. Paul seems to address the entire church by the phrase “nor do the churches of God” (1 Cor. 11:16b) and women ministering to men privately would have been inappropriate.

11) A woman’s prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11 refers to preaching, which is allowed of women today, indicating that the speaking limits in 1 Corinthians 14 does not include *all* speech.14

Response: Preaching is not the same as prophecy. Preaching interprets God’s Word whereas prophecy is uninterpreted (2 Pet. 1:20-21). This view also does not address 1 Timothy 2 that clearly prohibits women from teaching men, which would be included in preaching.

12) The prohibition of 1 Corinthians 14 is the general rule and the prophesying of 1 Corinthians 11 the exception occurring only in the Corinthian church—a practice which Paul did not necessarily approve (he only regulated it with the use of the veil). The principle of silence also applies in 1 Timothy 2 where women are not allowed to teach men as well. “It is only too apparent that the early church did not allow its women to take part audibly in public worship. That included preaching, praying in mixed company, and teaching men in public.”15

Response: Most (if not all) views above see 1 Corinthians 11 as the general rule on women's role in the church. Yet this emphasis upon 1 Corinthians 11 is not necessary, especially since the major teaching in this chapter is to illustrate with a head covering the woman's position of subordination to man (her role in the church service is not the emphasis). Undoubtedly, the women in Corinth prayed and prophesied in church, but Paul did not condone this practice and we find no evidence of women leading in worship in any other NT church. In 1 Timothy 2:8, he specifically states that it should be the *men* who are to pray in the worship service.

Therefore, the prohibition of 1 Corinthians 14 is the general rule and the prayer and prophecies of 1 Corinthians 11 the exception. Chapter 11 concerns the women's position but chapter 14 relates to the women's public activity, indicating that chapter 14 should be the norm for worship. This priority of silence is consistent with the 1 Timothy 2 prohibition from teaching men as well.

**Conclusion**

Both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 teach that the men in a congregation should lead in worship. Women should “remain silent” in the sense of public preaching, public prayer in the services of the church and teaching men in public (Priscilla's ministry to Apollos was approved of God as a *private* ministry in Acts 18). These limitations, of course, do not bar women from *all* ministries since older women are commanded to instruct the younger women (Tit. 2:4) and all women may teach children and serve the church in numerous other ways.

Finally, Charles Ryrie writes,

There are many times on both the home and foreign fields when there are simply no men to do the work. In such instances this writer feels that we need to remember that Paul not only commanded that things be done decently and in order but also that they be done. In such cases, then, one feels that it is better to do the work with qualified women—even though this is not the ideal—than to sit back and do nothing simply because there are no men. However, women must be cautioned against continuing in such work after there are trained men available for the job.16

To this I can heartily agree.

**Endnotes**

1Thomas Charles Edwards, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1885), 381.

2F. Godet, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1887), 2:915.

3Irene M. Robbins, “St. Paul and the Ministry of Women,” *Expository Times* 44 (January 1935), 186.

4Austin H. Stouffer, “The Ordination of Women: YES,” *Christianity Today* (February 20, 1981), 258.

5Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Ventura: G/L Publications, Regal Books, 1977), 112; David M. Scholer, “1 Timothy 2:9-15 & the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry,” in *Women, Authority & the Bible*, ed. Alvera Michelsen (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1986): 193-219 says that Paul’s prohibition related only to women at Ephesus who were succumbing to false teachers and is not a timeless principle.

6Williams, 71.

7Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 699; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 246.

8Robbins, 185.

9 George W. Knight III, “The Ordination of Women: NO,” *Christianity Today* (February 20, 1981), 262; H. Wayne House, “The Speaking of Women and the Prohibition of the Law,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (July-September 1988): 310. James B. Hurley says most interpreters have held this view (“Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women? A Consideration of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and 1 Cor. 14:33b-36,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (Winter 1973): 190.

10Godet, 324-325.

11James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 188-194.

12David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 541.

13Harold R. Holmyard III, “Does 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Refer to Women Praying and Prophesying in Church?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 154 (October-December 1997): 461-72; John MacArthur, Jr., *1 Corinthians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 256; W. E. Vine, *1 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1951), 147; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 437.

14Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1994), 219.

15Charles C. Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 80; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians,* 2d ed., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 230; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 201.

16Ryrie, 80.

## **A Study of 1 Timothy 2:11-12**

Paul wrote to Timothy, who gave pastoral oversight in Ephesus (1 Timothy 2:11-12, NIV):

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.

12I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”

Many issues strike the modern reader about this text. In what *context* do these restrictions appear? What is *meant* by “exercise authority*”* and is it negative or neutral? Are these limits *culturally* defined, applying only to first century Ephesus or to today too? If they *apply* today, then how—which ministries convey authority and are limited to men? These four issues are addressed below.

# Context: Do these limits apply to both private and public arenas?

## The six chapters of 1 Timothy alternate from teaching for Timothy (1), the church (2–3), Timothy (4), the church (5:1–6:10), and finally back to Timothy (6:11-21). The basic exhortation is that he makes sure order exists in both in his personal life and the church.

## Our text on women concerns order within *public worship* for these reasons:

### “I urge, then, first of all,” (2:1) indicates a change in subject from the more private “Timothy, my son” exhortations (1:18) of the previous context.

### The command, “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer” (2:8) does not mean women cannot pray in private. The context is the gathered church assembly.

### The prescription for modest dress (2:9-10) would make little sense privately.

### The exhortation for women to “learn in quietness and full submission” (2:11) obviously refers to the public assembly since parents—both mothers and fathers—are elsewhere commanded to teach children at home (e.g., Deut. 4:9-10; 11:14).

# Meaning: Is “exercise authority” the best translation?

## The text of 1 Timothy 2:12 not only prohibits women from teaching men in the worship service, but it also does not allow them to “have authority” (NIV, NLT, RSV) over men in this context. However, some argue that this prohibition not to “exercise authority” (NASB) has a negative connotation. In this sense, doesn’t Paul mean that women leaders should not “usurp authority” (KJV) in a domineering manner over men?

## This Greek verb (auvqente,w *authenteo*) can have either the negative meaning of “to domineer” or the positive idea of “to have authority over” (UBS dictionary).[[35]](#footnote-35) It is used only here in the Bible, making the sense difficult to determine as no NT cross-references can be consulted. However, the word is used many times in Greek literature from the first century BC to the fifteenth century AD. Henry Scott Baldwin wrote the most detailed study of *authenteo*. He concluded after studying 82 uses outside the NT that it has an unambiguously negative meaning (“tyrannize”) only *once*.[[36]](#footnote-36) Some claim Paul could have used a more common word for “authority” if he simply meant authority in a neutral or positive sense.[[37]](#footnote-37) However, each word for “authority” has a range of meanings.[[38]](#footnote-38) For *authenteo,* “the root meaning involves the concept of authority,”[[39]](#footnote-39) without referring to how that authority is used.[[40]](#footnote-40) Therefore, the idea of it being negative is unfounded.

## But 2 Timothy 2:12 has two infinitives, not just one: “I do not permit a woman *to teach* or *to have authority* over a man.” Some say that “these two infinitives joined by the word ‘neither’ (ouvde,) communicate a single coherent idea*” [[41]](#footnote-41)* so that only *one limit* is imposed—*authoritative teaching* in a worship service. It is true that teaching and authority are linked closely so that the sense of one of them applies to one also applies to the other. Either “both items proscribed are viewed negatively or positively. Thus, the verse either means ‘I do not permit a woman to teach falsely or domineer over a man’ or ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.’ The latter option is demanded, for there is no evidence here that the infinitive dida,skein [“to teach”] should be rendered ‘to teach falsely.’” [[42]](#footnote-42) In other words, since “teaching” is positive, “authority” must also carry a positive sense. However, teaching and authority are distinct concepts so the idea of only *one* prohibition here (“*authoritative teaching”*) cannot stand up exegetically.

# Culture: Does the prohibition from teaching and leading men apply today?

## Interestingly, these limits were never challenged in the church during the first nineteen centuries. However, since the rise of feminism (and evangelical feminism in particular), some modern interpreters say that Paul’s commands are culturally conditioned—applicable only in the first century. This assumes that women of his day could *not* teach men publicly—either in the Jewish synagogue or in the Gentile city of Ephesus.

## So how did women function in public worship in the first century? The assumption above is correct. Paul was consistent with the generally restrictive limits of his time. In fact, in the synagogues not only did they *not* teach, but they also worshipped in a different section.

## But what about Ephesus where Timothy ministered? Other evangelical feminists advocate that Paul was going *against* a prevailing liberalism in women’s roles. They seek to portray a “feminist Ephesus” so that this text “is not directed against women participating in leadership but rather against a *monopoly* on religious power by women.”[[43]](#footnote-43) However, even in Roman-Greco political groups and in the Artemis cult in Ephesus, it was still the *men* who occupied the highest positions—both in politics[[44]](#footnote-44) and in religion. In fact, the priests who served the majority of pagan deities in Ephesus were male![[45]](#footnote-45)

## However, though Paul’s teaching of predominant leadership for men (not women) was consistent with both pagan and Jewish practice, he did not support his stance by appealing to culture. In verses 13-15 he appealed to the trans-cultural creation order. Since Adam was created first (2:13), male headship applies to all cultures and all times. Male leadership is also based on Eve’s sin of being deceived so that sin entered the human race (2:14). For this reason, God’s plan is for women to lead their children rather than lead in the church services (2:15).[[46]](#footnote-46) While many say that for a woman to train her children at home does not fully utilize her gifts, this is certainly not the view of Scripture. God has a very high view of the impact of parents in their children’s lives.

# Application: Which church ministries *convey authority* and thus are limited to men?

## Churches today often decide women’s roles based on pragmatism rather than God’s Word. Some say that since some women are gifted as teachers, they can teach men in the church service. This pragmatism does not address the limits of 1 Timothy 2:12. Such decision-making based on experience rather than the Bible assumes women must exercise their gifts in a mixed (both sexes) worship service. However, many other avenues of ministry outside the worship service exist: women’s and children’s ministries, parachurch groups, etc. Countries like China rely extensively on the teaching of “Bible women.” God will require an accounting of the church in each culture as to the degree to which the Bible affected culture (or vice versa). Some churches reason that they lack godly men, but we must decide what our authority will be.

## Our church holds the Bible as final authority, even where it makes unpopular demands. Article 4.6 of our Constitution states, “The Bible is the inspired Word of God written without error, our only sure source of knowledge about God and His plans, and our absolute guide for doctrinal teaching and godly living (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).” Since Scripture disallows women from teaching or having authority over men in the church assembly, the leaders have concluded that we will follow God’s limits. Thus women do not teach by preaching to men in our church services.

## How else does Paul limit women from exercising authority in a worship service? Surely singing a solo or on the worship team does not have authority, but being the worship leader may convey such authority. In the OT, both men (1 Chron. 9:33) and women (Neh. 7:67) served as temple singers and instrumentalists, but men always led the worship (e.g., 1 Chron. 16:4-6). However, in NT churches (unlike in the synagogue/temple), men and women sat together. We assume that NT saints followed the OT pattern of male worship leading based on the creation order and the injunction for men alone to pray publicly (2:8).

# Do You Agree or Disagree?

To explore your own ideas on this vital subject, please mark as A, U, or D beside each statement below to show whether you Agree, are Unsure, or Disagree with the teaching.

## A woman should not serve as a pastor-teacher with authority over an entire church.

## A woman should not serve as an elder (or other role on the highest ruling council) of a church.

## A woman should not be the main worship leader in the church worship service.

## A woman should not be an adult Christian Education director with authority over male teachers.

## A woman should not be a children’s Sunday school director with authority over male teachers.

## A woman should not teach a mixed adult Sunday School class at the church building.

## A woman should not teach a mixed adult cell group at a private home.

## A woman should not teach a mixed biblical studies course at a seminary or Bible college.

## A woman should not teach a mixed non-biblical course at a seminary or Bible college.

# Conclusion

Believers who take 1 Timothy 2:12 seriously find the above agree-disagree statements difficult. Where does one draw the line? As advocates of grace, our church believes that women should be given as much latitude as biblically possible. Scripture does not prohibit women from teaching men in private contexts such as Priscilla and Aquila did with Apollos (Acts 18:26). This would allow them to teach any course in the seminary, as well as teaching and serving in most leadership positions within the church. In fact, Scripture grants women authority to direct men in *most* local church positions, except (a) being an elder (repeated “he” and “husband” of 1 Tim. 3:1-7), (b) serving as a deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-12), (c) leading as senior pastor (an elder position), and (d) the public assembly context of 1 Timothy 2 requires women to listen rather than to teach *in that worship service only*, and to follow rather than to exercise authority over men *in that worship service only.* Surely many women are as gifted by the Spirit as are men (both now and in Paul’s day), but this is not the issue. The point is that both NT examples and commands impose the above as universal limitations in their roles. That these limits are not applied in many (especially missionary) settings does not absolve our church from obedience. Therefore, we agree with statements A & B above, we’re unsure with C, and disagree with D-I.

The four questions addressed in this paper have the following answers:

1. Context: Do these limits apply to both private and public arenas? *They relate to public worship only.*

2. Meaning: Is “exercise authority” the best translation? *Yes, it has a neutral or positive sense.*

3. Culture: Does the prohibition from teaching and leading men apply today? *Yes, it is transcultural.*

4. Application: Which church ministries convey authority and thus should be restricted to men? *Limits in 1 Timothy 2:8, 12 prohibit women from teaching or authoritative leadership (e.g., leading in prayer) in a church worship service. Other texts limit them from being an elder (esp. pastor-teacher) or deacon.*

The cliché says, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” Was it true years ago before the rise of feminism? Is it true today? How can women have the greatest impact for Christ? Paul believed in marriage and in the great influence that mothers have over their children (1 Cor. 7:14). He also wanted people to do the most for the cause of Christ—men and women alike. For this reason, he continued the age-old practice in the first century of keeping women in the most influential place possible in society: the home (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15). However, women are also gifted of God to serve Christ in thousands of ways outside the family, with the exception of the few public context positions noted in the NT.

Supplements (by Rev. Raymond Choy)

A Primer to Apologetics & Evangelism

Ecclesiology: Church Discipline/Restoration

## Syllabus for Theology III (Jan-May 2002)

### Course Description

This course addresses the nature, purpose, multiplication, leadership, discipline, ordinances, unity, and body life of the local church. Students see a variety of opinions on each of these subjects but should support their own conviction from Scripture.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course the student should be able to …

(a-f and l only for ACOM students)

#### Articulate the biblical nature of the local church (define what the church is).

#### Articulate the biblical purpose of the local church (show what the church is supposed to do) so as to develop priorities for change in his own ministry.

#### Apply the distinction between function and form along with the roles of Scripture, history, and culture to bring relevance to local church issues.

#### Know how church multiplication (evangelism and growth) can be accomplished in his ministry.

#### Explain from Scripture the proper means of church discipline in order to restore sinning believers in his local church.

#### Implement the most important NT principles of leadership.

#### Discern the NT pattern for church leadership selection in order to evaluate the student’s own leadership style and the offices in his assembly.

#### Defend what the student considers the most biblical church government structure after studying various alternate views.

#### Prove from Scripture one’s own view on the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) to make these celebrations more meaningful.

#### Implement biblical principles of body life to meet edification needs in his church.

#### Know the importance of and process towards unity in the student’s local body and with other churches.

#### Implement his own biblically-based philosophy of ministry that shows the steps his church will follow to train a new believer to become a spiritual leader who is mature in Christ.

### Course Requirements

#### ACOM students have time only to read these notes (50% of grade) and complete one Study Project (50% of grade). The following adapts Study Project #9 in the regular course to achieve the final objective in the section immediately above: Summarize the nature, purpose, and potential discipline steps needed to guide a new Christian into a leadership position within your church. Outline the steps you will take and the minimum time needed at each stage of the process. You may use diagrams if you wish.

#### Church Dynamics Study (40% of Theology III course) addresses practical areas on the Spirit and the Church. The remaining 60% is addressed in Eschatology.

##### Readings (10%) will be assigned for most lessons. The Schedule in this syllabus serves as a Reading Report to be handed in at the end of the church dynamics part of the course. Eschatology readings will be reported on quizzes.

##### Workbook (10%): Please work your way through the self-guided study by answering the questions in a notebook which I will periodically request to see and grade.

##### Study Projects (20%): These should be typed and handed in separately according to the class schedule. SBC students need do only Part 1 in each study project.

#### Quizzes (20%) over the reading assignments will be given at the beginning of six class periods in eschatology. These will be short (10-15 minutes) with 5-10 questions.

#### Eschatology Midterm (20%) will test comprehension of the first half of the eschatology section of the course. This is a combination multiple-choice, short answer, fill-in the blanks, and essay exam. You will take it home and have a few days to complete it on your own.

#### The Eschatology Final Exam (20%) will cover eschatology class lectures and notes since the midterm. The format may be similar to the midterm, though it may be entirely essay.

#### Fun night at my home is required of all diligent students (that’s you!). Bring your spouse and kids too. Come after dinner for dessert at our place on Saturday, 3 March, 7-9 PM.

N.B. Each of the preceding requirements has a 10% grade penalty per class day late. Also, points may be deducted for not including your full name and box number on assignments, exceeding the page limit, and improper grammar and spelling.

ABCOM with Raymond

Session Date (Day) Subject Assignment

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | (Fri 1) | Syllabus & Introduction |  |  |
| 2 | (Fri 1) | Nature & Purpose (Rick) |  |  |
| 3 | (Fri 2) | Evangelism (Raymond) |  |  |
| 4 | (Sat 1) | Leadership (Rick) |  |  |
| 5 | (Sat 1) | Government (Rick) | Grudem, 904-45 (optional) |  |
| 6 | (Sat 2) | Discipline (Raymond) | Grudem, 887-901 = 14 |  |
| 7 |  | Baptism | Grudem, 966-84 = 23 |  |
| 8 |  | Lord’s Supper | Grudem, 988-99 = 12 |  |
| 9 |  | Edification |  |  |
| 10 |  | Implementing Change |  |  |
| 11 |  | Unity |  |  |
|  |  | Philosophy of Ministry |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Answers to page 10 without hidden text

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Metaphor**  **& Text** | **Ministry of**  **Christ** | **Ministry of**  **Church** | **Applications** |
| Body  • 1 Cor. 12  • Col. 1:18 | Sustains church for unity  LIFE of Christ | Depends upon Christ  Worship, edification | Let diversity within unity focus on Christ as the common source |
| Bride  • Eph. 5:25-27  • Eph. 3:18-19  • 2 Cor. 11:2 | Depth of love Bridegroom (Christ) has for Bride (Church)  LOVE of Christ | Purifies herself to show her love  Worship, edification | Prepare to meet Christ as a bride prepares for her wedding |
| Building/Temple  • Eph. 2:21-22  • 1 Pet. 2:4-6  • 1 Cor. 3:10-11 | Foundation Stone for growth who indwells each believer  PRESENCE of Christ | Grows together as all believers build on the foundation  Worship, edification, multiplication | Maintain unity so as not to dishonor Christ’s presence |
| Priesthood  • 1 Pet. 2:5-9  • Rev. 1:4-6  • Rev. 5:9-10  • Rev. 20:6 | Accepts worship from every Christian  DEITY of Christ | Each believer should offer a sacrifice of praise to God as a witness to the world  Worship, multiplication | No real clergy-laity distinction exists |
| Flock  • Acts 20:28  • 1 Pet. 5:4  • John 10:11, 14 | Cares for sheep as the Good Shepherd  CARE of Christ | Focus on needs of sheep rather than ministry:  rest, food, guidance, encouragement, healing, etc.  Edification | Remain within the flock for protection and care from the Shepherd |

1. Adapted from *Church Dynamics* (Colorado Springs, CO: BEE International, July 2000), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The definitions in this section are from Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: SP Pub. [Victor Books], 1986), 395-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Church Dynamics,* 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Adapted from *Church Dynamics Course Guide* (Colorado Springs, CO: BEE International, July 2000), 12-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. John MacArthur, *The Church: The Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Adapted from Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Adapted from *Church Dynamics Course Guide*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid., 63-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Adapted from *Church Dynamics*, Study Project 2, p. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adapted from Romans 11 notes of John D. Grassmick, Romans 206, Dallas Seminary, 1985, p. 48 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology,* 389-90, 522; Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 399. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. These points are taken from Kenneth O. Gangel, “Marks of a Healthy Church,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (October-December 2001): 467-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Adapted from Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, 2nd ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1986, 1988), 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, 132-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul: The Epistle to the Philippians*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The following is adapted significantly from Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to Its Rightful Place in the Church*, rev. (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1997), 5-28. This is a pamphlet size summary of his earlier full length book. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Chuck Swindoll, *Excellence in Ministry* (Fullerton, CA; Insight for Living, 1985), 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to Its Rightful Place in the Church*, rev. (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1997), 21. This is a pamphlet size summary of his earlier full length book available for US$14.99 at http://www.discerning reader.com/bibelalstrau.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Swindoll, *Excellence in Ministry*, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. “They are a group by themselves, not just the wives of the deacons nor *all* the women who belong to the church.…On the other hand, the fact that no special and separate paragraph is used in describing their necessary qualifications, but that these are simply wedged in between the stipulated requirements for deacons, with equal clarity indicates that these women are not to be regarded as constituting a third order in the church, the office of ‘deaconess,’ on par with and endowed with authority equal to that of deacons” (William Hendricksen, *Pastoral Epistles*, NTC, 346; Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 85). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. NIV, KJV, NKJV, GNB, Beck, LB, Phillips; Wiersbe, 51-52; Earle, *EBC*, 11:368; Litfin, *BKC*, 2:238 says the view has a “slim advantage.” [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. ; NIV footnote, Williams; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 229-33; Kelly, 83; Newport J. D. White, in *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, 4:115-16; J. H. Bernard, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 58-59; Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC, 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Wiersbe, 52, cites this as a second possibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Adapted from Hurley, 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ibid, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. J. Carl Laney, *A Guide to Church Discipline* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985), 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Laney, 22-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Points 2-5 adapted from Ted Kitchens, “Corrective Church Discipline” ( Th.D. diss, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989), 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Adapted from Kitchens, ThD diss., 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Kleist notes that the scholarly opinion on the date of *The Didache* ranges from the first to the third centuries (p. 4); however, while noting factors that seem to exclude the apostolic age, he himself argues for a first century date (approx. AD 50-90) based upon the title, Acts 15:28ff., the language and subject matter, ecclesiastical organization, and baptism in streams (pp. 5-6). Arguing even earlier is Jean Paul Audet, *La Didach´;, Instructions des Apôtres*, 219 (AD 50-70), and a median date of at the "end of the first or beginning of the second century" is proposed by Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL, 1:338. Still later dates cited by scholars include AD 100-150 (Quasten, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1:36-37), "mid-second century" (Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3:76), and an original text of AD 100 published in AD 150 (Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 286). Despite this range of dates, the writing is still very early. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Summarized from Grudem, 988-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Jeffery Khoo, *Biblical Separation: Doctrine of Church Purification and Preservation* (Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College Press, 1999), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Taken from and addressed by Khoo, 48-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The negative sense is also indicated as possible in Thayer’s Lexicon, though Thayer does not apply this meaning to 1 Tim. 2:12: “**auvqente,w**, avuqe,ntw; (a Biblical and ecclesiastical word; from auvqe,nthj contracted from auvtoe,nthj, and this from auvto,j and e;ntea arms (others, e`nthj, cf. Hesychius sunenthj sunergo,j; cf. Lobeck, Technol., p. 121); hence, a. according to earlier usage, *one who with his own hand kills either others or himself.* b. in later Greek writings *one who does a thing himself the author* (th/j pra,xewj, Polybius 23, 14, 2, etc.); *one who acts on his own authority*, autocratic, equivalent to auvtokra,twr an absolute master; cf. Lobeck ad Phryn., p. 120 (also as above; cf. Winer's Grammar, sec. 2, 1 c.)); *to govern* one, *exercise dominion* over one: tinj, 1 Tim. 2:12.\*” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. H. Scott Baldwin, “A Difficult Word,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, eds. Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Andrew C. Perriman, “What Eve Did, What Women Shouldn’t Do: The Meaning of AUQENTEW in 1 Timothy 2:12,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 135; Richard and Catherine Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman; Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 84; Alva Mickelsen, “An Egalitarian View: There is Neither Male Nor Female in Christ,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, ed. B. Clouse and R. G. Clouse (Downers Grove: IVP, 1989), 202; David M. Scholer, “1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry,” *Women, Authority, and the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 205; Philip H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction* (JSNTSup 34; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 216; Ben Wiebe, “Two Texts on Women (1 Tim 2:11-15; Gal 3:26-29): A Test of Interpretation,” *Horizons in Biblical Thinking* 16 (1994): 59-60; all cited by Thomas Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church*, 132, n. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Schreiner, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Baldwin, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Despite the above evidence, some still favor the negative sense of “domineer”: Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksen, 1988), 73; Timothy J. Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2” *Evangelical Quarterly* 62 (1990): 342; Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksen, 1992), 109; Carroll D. Osburn, “AUQENTEW (1 Timothy 2:12),” *Restoration Quarterly* 25 (1982): 1-12; Philip B. Payne, “Libertarian Women in Ephesus: A Response to Douglas J. Moo’s Article, ‘1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,’” *Trinity Journal* 2 n.s. (1981): 175; Towner, *Goal of Our Instruction*, 215-16; Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 121-22; Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ: New Testament Teaching on Women in Office* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 71-72; Steve Motyer, “Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8-15,” *Vox Evangelica* 24 (1994): 95-96; all cited by Schreiner, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Philip B. Payne, “Ouvde, in 1 Timothy 2:12,” paper presented at the 1988 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 104-8; Boomsma, 72-73; Motyer, 96; all cited by Schreiner, 133. Kostenberger, 82-84 critiques Payne. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Schreiner, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Kroegers, 93, emphasis mine (cited by S. M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in *Women in the Church*, 15). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. “There were a number of primary magistrates and civic groups at Ephesus. No women are known to have filled these magistracies at Ephesus in the first century” (Baugh, 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. If a supposed feminine supremacy in religions in Ephesus was true, “We would expect to find either priestesses or other women controlling the resources of the [cult of Artemis] and appointments to its offices. Instead, Ephesian religious affairs were governed by the Roman and municipal authorities who were decidedly male” (Baugh, 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. This verse states, “But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety” (2:15). Either “saved” has a [less-used] meaning of “preserved” or, if it refers to spiritual salvation, the verse is an appropriate response to false teachers at Ephesus who denigrated marriage (1 Tim. 4:3), and childbearing. Adhering to this God-given role of childbearing still will not save, so Paul adds character qualities that show real faith. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)