

1 BIBLE BASICS

2

3 Church: Structure

What does the Bible say about the church's members, officers & government?

4 Church Members

■ The meaning of *ekklesia* expects membership

- ▷ A New Testament *ekklesia* did not include all believers everywhere, but only those who are called out to a particular assembly.
- ▷ A New Testament *ekklesia* was made up of believers who were baptised (immersed under water) after salvation and added to the congregation. (Acts 2:41) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

5 Church Members

■ It is true that church membership is not specifically commanded in the Bible.

■ However, it is implied and it is necessary for church discipline to work.

- ▷ (Matthew 18:17) "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."
- ▷ It is impossible for a church to discipline someone who is not a church member.

6 Church Members

■ Biblical requirements for membership

- ▷ A clear testimony of faith in Jesus Christ, (Acts 2:41) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."
- ▷ Biblical baptism by immersion after salvation, (Acts 2:41).
- ▷ Harmony with the church's doctrine and practice, (Romans 16:17) "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (See also 2 Thessalonians 3:6). Harmony is compatibility, not necessarily identical thinking.

7 Church Officers

■ The Bible only mentions two official church officers, pastor and deacon or three if we include the evangelist.

■ This does not forbid the election of other lower officers like clerk, treasurer, etc., but it does forbid electing higher officers.

8 Church Officers

■ **Pastor**

- ▷ The Bible calls the church leader by several titles. He is a pastor (shepherd) and teacher, (Ephesians 4:11). He is a bishop or overseer, (1 Timothy 3:1). He is an elder, (1 Peter 5:1). Elder and bishop is the same person. (Compare Acts 20:17 - Acts 20:28 and Titus 1:5 - Titus 1:7)
- ▷ A pastor's qualifications, (Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9)
- ▷ Ordaining or choosing a pastor
 - By a church "vote by stretching out the hand" (Acts 14:23, 2Co 8:19)
 - With missionary guidance that does not rule out a church vote (Tit 1:5)

9 Church Officers

■ **Pastor**

- ▷ Pastor's duties include shepherding, willingly overseeing, and being an example not a dictator, (1 Peter 5:2-3, see also Tit 1:9; Act 6:4; 2Tim 4:2-5; Jas 5:14).
- ▷ The title "pastor" is a respectful biblical term, (Jeremiah 3:15, Eph 4:11). It is not a "lording" title of superiority.
- ▷ The congregation is to support and honour its pastor. A faithful pastor deserves honour and pay, (1 Timothy 5:17-18, see also 1Co 9:7-14; Heb 13:7, 17).

10 Church Officers

■ **Deacons**

- ▷ The title means "servant", "minister", or "waiter"
- ▷ The office probably began in Acts 6:1-6, though they were not called deacons. They were chosen by the congregation.
- ▷ Deacons were chosen when needed and when qualified.
- ▷ Their qualifications, (Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

11 Church Officers

■ **Deacons**

- ▷ Their duties were to care for secular matters so the pastors could spend more time with spiritual matters.
- ▷ Their work was more manual and the pastor's more mental.
- ▷ They never formed a "board" nor did they govern.
- ▷ The Bible never says that they were ever the pastor's advisers or counsellors.

12 Church Government or Polity

■ **Unbiblical forms of church government**

- ▷ Autocratic - hierarchical in structure ruled by a pope with cardinals and bishop under him
- ▷ Episcopal - governed by bishops of the denomination
- ▷ Presbyterian - governed by presbyters, through synods and general assemblies of the denomination

■ These do not follow the Bible pattern of local church autonomy.

13 Church Government or Polity

■ **The Biblical form of church government**

- ▷ Every local church, *once they are able*, is to be autonomous (self-governing and self-supporting).
- ▷ In each biblical church, Jesus Christ is the head (Eph 1:22, 5:23, Col 1:18), the Holy Spirit is the administrator (Ac 1:8, 4:31, 13:2, 20:28, Re 2:7), and the congregation biblically governs. Biblical churches do not form an organised denomination.
- ▷ Every member has an equal vote and the majority decides. Their decisions are final, (Acts 15:22).
- ▷ Each congregation calls its own pastor, (Acts 14:23).

14 Church Government or Polity

- ▷ Each church may send or support missionaries of their own choosing, (Acts 13:3).
- ▷ All cases of church discipline are settled by the congregation, (Matthew 18:17).
- ▷ Each church is autonomous. It has no right to control another congregation and no other congregation may control it.
- ▷ Each church is self-supporting. They do not depend on funds from a denomination for purchases or payment of their pastor.

➤ Any church affiliation with Baptist associations or fellowships is voluntary.

15 **Church: Structure Review**

1 What church membership qualifications are found in Acts 2:41?

Believed, baptised, added unto them

In what passage in Matthew did Jesus instruct on church discipline?

Matthew 18:15-17

What church officers are listed in the Bible?

Pastor, deacons (possibly evangelists)

2 What biblical duties did the deacons have?

Care for secular matters

What word best describes biblical church government?

Autonomous

16 **Let's Get Practical**

■ Why would it be wrong to soften our biblical stand in order to increase our membership?