



Lesson 3: Officers

8/23/15

INTRODUCTION

Baptist Distinctives — We are baptistic in our ministry philosophy because we believe that the New Testament teaches the following eight elements of a local church.

- B — biblical authority** → We believe that God’s Word alone (not tradition, church counsels, or a human leader) is our rule for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:15-4:5).
- A — autonomous government** → We believe that the local church body is responsible to independently and congregationally govern itself, without any denominational oversight (see below).
- P — priesthood of the believer** → We believe that every believer can personally access God’s throne with confidence through our Mediator, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5, 9; 1 Timothy 2:5).
- T — two ordinances: baptism & the Lord’s Supper** → We believe that Jesus commanded His followers to practice two ordinances as a testimony and memorial of His salvific work on our behalf (believer’s baptism by immersion—Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; Lord’s Supper—1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- I — individual soul liberty** → We believe that every believer will one day give account for himself/herself before the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:10); therefore, he/she is individually responsible to read, interpret, and practice what is taught in Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11).
- S — saved church membership** → We believe that the local church membership should be comprised of those who have a profession of saving faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 10:13; Acts 2:41-47).

T — two offices: pastor & deacon → We believe that the New Testament has inaugurated two servant leader roles in the local church (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Philippians 1:1).

S — separation of church and state → We believe in the freedom of religion from governmental control (Matthew 22:21).

Our goal in this lesson is to consider what the New Testament teaches about the two offices of the local church.

WHO OWNS THE CHURCH? Jesus

Jesus Christ is the sole Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18a)!

1. ***By right of creation (Colossians 1:18b)*** — He founded the church.
2. ***By right of construction (Matthew 16:18)*** — He is building the church.
3. ***By right of purchase (Acts 20:28)*** — He bought the church with His blood.
4. ***By right of position (Eph. 1:22-23)*** — He was ordained Head over the church.
5. ***By right of passion (Ephesians 5:25-26)*** — He loves the church.

He exercises absolute authority over His churches (Revelation 1:12-13, 20), and He mediates His authority through His Word (Ephesians 5:26).

WHO LEADS THE CHURCH? Pastors and Deacons

Local churches should be lead by servant leaders (Mark 10:42-45). Both deacons (Acts 6:2) and pastors (Acts 6:4) should be “servants,” and in light of their character and calling, they should lead the flock. Furthermore, these servant leaders should be men (1 Timothy 2:11-14), should be financially supported by the local body (1 Timothy 5:17-18), should be respected and submitted to (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17), and should be held accountable (James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19-22).

1. Pastor

- **Name** — The words *pastor* (Gk. verb, poimein), *elder* (Gk. noun, presbuteros), and *bishop* (Gk. noun, episkopos) refer to the same office (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:17, 28-30).
 - *Pastor*: “to shepherd” — term of endearment, relationship, and general ministry
 - *Elder*: “bearded one” — term of respect, sobriety, and authority
 - *Bishop*: “overseer” — term of administration
- **Role** — shepherd (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4): to feed (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5), equip (Ephesians 4:11-14), and protect (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9-16) via preaching and teaching God’s Word (Acts 20:20-21, 24, 27, 32; 2 Timothy 3:15-4:5)
- **Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26)** — a normal Christian standard of exemplary (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3) holiness/distinction, blamelessness, goodness, and maturity (even testing), including in the home; additionally, “able to teach”
- **Number** — singular or plural (singular: Timothy, Titus, 1 Timothy 3:2; plural: Acts 11:30; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18; Philippians 1:1; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1)
 - *The wisdom of plurality*: “it balances personal weakness, it diffuses congregational criticism, it adds pastoral wisdom, it indigenizes leadership, it enables corrective discipline, it defuses ‘us vs. him’” (*The Deliberate Church*, p. 133-135)
 - *The wisdom of a senior/lead pastor*: God’s pattern has been to work through an “under-head” (e.g., marriage, patriarchs, judges, theocracy, etc.); “a two-headed anything is a monster”; where does the “buck stop”?

2. Deacon

- **Name** — The Greek word *diakonos* literally means “servant.”
- **Role** — servant (Acts 6:1-2)
- **Qualifications (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:3)** — a normal Christian standard of holiness/distinction, blamelessness, goodness, and maturity (even testing), including in the home
- **Number** — plural (Acts 6:3, 5; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8)

WHO GOVERNS THE CHURCH? The local church body

There are three main models of local church government:

- **Episcopal** — “rule by bishops”: government of several local churches in a geographical area by an overseeing bishop; e.g., the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church → arguments against: (1) “bishop” = “elder”; (2) apostles ≠ today’s pastors (Ephesians 2:20; 4:11)
- **Presbyterian** — “rule by elders”: government of a local church by an overseeing hierarchy (local presbytery, regional synod, and General Assembly); e.g., Presbyterian churches, Reformed churches → arguments against: (1) Acts 15 isn’t a strong parallel to their GA; (2) can lead to heretical coercion upon the local churches by the overseeing bodies
- **Congregational** — “rule by the congregation”: government of all local church issues by that local church; e.g., most Baptist and many Bible churches

As noted above, we believe in a congregational form of local church government. The very Greek word for “church” (*ekklesia*) was used in the society of the day to refer to a democratic group. Furthermore, support for a congregational form of church government is discovered in the following decisions which local New Testament churches made congregationally.

1. *The church body oversees missionaries (Acts 13:1-3; 14:27).*
2. *The church body affirms doctrine (Acts 15:1-3, 22-23).*
3. *The church body elects pastors (Acts 14:23).*
4. *The church body selects deacons (Acts 6:1-7).*
5. *The church body manages finances (Acts 12:29-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:19, 23).*
6. *The church administrates discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 5:20).*

RESOURCES

9 Marks, *The Deliberate Church*

<http://www.colonialindy.org/our-beliefs.html>

<http://www.keepbelieving.com/?p=370>