

The Church

The Structure of a Church

Now that we have established *what* a Church is, we will turn our attention to the organization of a Church. This is an area that great importance and where many denominations deviate from the Biblical model.

I. Major Forms of Church Government

A. Episcopal

1. Authority in this type of government rests in leaders (bishops, etc.) who have authority over local congregation
2. Catholics and Methodists use forms of this

B. Presbyterian

1. Authority in this type of government rests on a group of elders in a local congregation.
2. Sometimes a groups of these elders will form larger governing bodies, sometimes called a Synod.
3. Presbyterians (duh), Reformed, and many Bible churches follow this model.

C. Congregational

1. Authority in this type of government rests on the will of the congregation, who are responsible for electing their own local leadership.
2. Congregationalists (don't see them much any more) and Baptists follow this model.

D. Dictatorship

1. Authority here rests solely on the leader of the church, and their will is law in the group.
2. This is an extremely dangerous and very cult-like model.

II. The Biblical From of Church Government

A. The Church is under the headship of Christ

1. Colossians 1:17-18, Ephesians 5:22-25, Matthew 16:18
2. The ultimate leader, love, purpose, and example for the church to follow is Christ Himself (I Corinthians 11:1, I Peter 5:3-4)
3. The church is His because He loved it and purchased it with His sacrifice.

B. The Church follows the authority of Scripture

1. II Timothy 3:16-17; I Peter 1:23-25
2. The church is not to be built on theory, personality, or any other guide except the Word of God

C. The Church is governed democratically through congregational rule

1. Each local congregation is free to govern itself according to its own conscience and the guides of the Spirit and the Scripture.
2. Some examples from the Scripture
 - a) Matthias was elected by "lot" or vote of the church - Acts 1:26
 - b) Deacons were elected by the church - Acts 6:1-7
 - c) Missionaries were sent by the church - Acts 11:22-24, 13:1-4

- d) Church discipline is the responsibility of the congregation - I Corinthians 5:1-13
- D. The Church is led by Pastors and Deacons
 - 1. These are elected to their positions by the congregation.
 - 2. The congregation also holds the power to dismiss them.
 - 3. Do not forget that God is working in this! - Ephesians 4:8,11-12
 - 4. The Pastor
 - a) Leads as the executive head of the church (bishop) - I Timothy 3:1
 - b) Leads through teaching, training, and discipling (pastor and teacher) - Ephesians 4:11
 - c) Leads through example (ruler) - Hebrews 13:7,17,24
 - d) Leads through service (servant) - 2 Corinthians 4:1,5
 - e) His qualifications are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9
 - f) Should be ordained - I Timothy 4:14, Titus 1:3
 - 5. The Deacon
 - a) Leads through service (servant) - Acts 6:1-7, I Timothy 3:8-13
 - b) Deacons are never given ruling authority in the scriptures greater than any other members. Their authority lies in their service and example.
 - 6. Other offices (Treasurer, Sunday School teacher, etc.) are acceptable as long as they do not usurp the Biblical model of church government.