

What is Biblical Church Government? Lesson 1 – Church Structure

Introduction:

- In the Bible, God has given us guidelines and principles regarding the _____ and _____ of His church.

1. The _____ of the church begins with Christ Himself.

A. God the Father has given _____ authority to His son Jesus, and He reigns over all forevermore.

Matt 11.27a All things have been handed over to me by my Father.

Matt 28.18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

- The church is the _____ of Christ.
- Jesus is the _____ of His body, the church.

Eph 1.22-23 he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23_which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Eph 4.15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

Eph 5.23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Col 1.18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Col 1.24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

- Since the church is Jesus' body, and He is the head, He clearly has _____ over His own body.
- Those who are appointed to lead God's sheep must first _____ to Christ's authority.

B. Christ rules the church through the _____.

John 14.16 And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever.**

John 16.8 And when he comes, **he will convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

John 16.13 When the Spirit of truth comes, **he will guide you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

- **The Holy Spirit was sent to perform three very essential roles in the church:**
 - To _____ with us forever as our Helper.
 - To _____ us of sin.
 - To _____ us in the truth, because He IS the truth.
- **Christ rules His church through the _____ of the Holy Spirit.**
- **This is one reason why Christians are command to be _____ by the Holy Spirit who lives within us and is present among us when we gather as the church.**

Gal 5.16-17 But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Gal 5.24 If we live by the Spirit, **let us also keep in step with the Spirit.**

Rom 8.3b-4 By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, **who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Eph 5:19 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, **but be filled with the Spirit.**

- **Christ leads the church by calling us to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that _____ can be carried out in the church.**
- **If the Holy Spirit does not control us when we _____ the church, then we will lead the church according to our own will, not Christ's.**

C. Church authority must be based upon the _____.

- **Those who lead in the church must be _____ by God's Word.**

2 Tim 3.16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Pet 1.20-21 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 20 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 119.105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Psalm 19.7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

- **The church is never allowed to _____ anything to Scripture.**

Rev 22.18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,

- **The church is never allowed to _____ anything in Scripture.**

Rev 22.19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

- **The church should always fully _____ to Scripture.**

Deut 4.1-2 "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 22 You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.

Deut 12.32 "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

- **Church leaders must rule the church by first being _____ to the authority of the Word of God.**

D. The church must be led like it is a _____, not merely an organization.

- Like a human body, the church is composed of _____ with different roles to perform.

1 Cor 12.12 *For just as the body is one and **has many members**, and all the members of the body, **though many, are one body**, so it is with Christ.*

1 Cor 12.27 *Now you are **the body** of Christ and **individually members** of it.*

1 Cor 12.14-17 ***For the body does not consist of one member but of many.** 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?*

- By comparing the church to a human body, Paul is showing that the church is also a living body with members that are _____ on one another.
- No one, not even the leaders of the church, should think that they are _____ than another member.

Matt 23.5-6 *They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, 6 and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues.*

- God's Word teaches us that the functioning of the church is a _____ responsibility.
- Church members are not just an audience, they are all to be _____ in the work of the Kingdom.

1 Cor 12.24b-27 *But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have **the same care for one another**. 26 If one member suffers, **all suffer together**; if one member is honored, **all rejoice together**. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*

- Here are some examples of how everyone participates in the church:
 - _____ one another through a variety of ways.

- Being accountable to one another to live _____.
- Rebuking and correcting one another when in error or _____.
- Using our spiritual gifts to _____ one another.
- Using our spiritual gifts to _____ the church's leadership.
- Church leadership is also a _____ responsibility.
- The Lord did not intend for all of the church's authority to be possessed by _____.

Acts 14.23 *And when they had **appointed elders** for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*

James 5.14 *Is anyone among you sick? Let him **call for the elders** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

Titus 1.5 *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and **appoint elders** in every town as I directed you.*

E. The purpose of church government is _____ not dominion.

- Those who hold a church office serve both _____ and His _____.
- Elders are not called to enjoy prestige and power, but to become _____ for the loving care of God's people.

Acts 20.28 *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.***

Matt 20.25-26 *But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant.***

Matt 20.27-28 *and **whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28** even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

John 13.5 *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

John 13.14-15 *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.*

1 Pet 5.1-3 *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, **exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly**, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 **not domineering over those in your charge**, but being examples to the flock.*

- The government of Christ's church involves _____ love.

Eph 5.2 *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Col 3.14 *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

- Leading the church is a call to honor God through _____ service to others in His Kingdom.

2. The members of the Christ church must _____ to the appointed elders.

- Even though church leaders are sinful, imperfect people, church members are commanded to do four things:

- Church members are commanded to _____ their leaders.

1 Thess 5.12 *We ask you, brothers, to **respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord** and admonish you,*

- Church members are commanded to _____ their leaders.

1 Thess 5.13 *and to esteem **them very highly in love** because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.*

- Church members are commanded to _____ the example of their leaders.

Heb 13.7 *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and **imitate their faith**.*

- Church members are commanded to _____ their leaders.

Heb 13.17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- It should bring Christians great _____ that God has provided elders to watch over their souls, and it should motivate members to submit to their leaders.

Conclusion:

- We should be _____ to the Lord that:
 - He is the head of the church.
 - He has sent the Holy Spirit to lead the church.
 - He has given the Word of God to guide the church.
 - He has given godly leaders to serve the church.
- Those are the ways through which God is _____ His church!