

Biblical Church Leadership

Session #1

Why Study Biblical Church Leadership?

- 1) Because the New Testament teaches that Christ is the head of the Church.
 - a. **Colossians 1:18** – “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.”
 - b. **Ephesians 5:23-24** – “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. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”
- 2) Because the New Testament teaches that local churches need direction regarding the “ordering of the church.”
 - a. **Acts 6:1-6** – “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.”
 - b. **Titus 1:5** – “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.”
 - c. **1 Timothy 3:14-15** – “¹⁴ I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”
- 3) Because the New Testament teaches that local churches are more effective and fruitful when the church is “ordered” according to God’s Word.
 - a. **Acts 6:7** – “⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”
 - b. **1 Corinthians 14:26, 39-40** – “²⁶ What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up...³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.”
 - c. **Ephesians 4:11-16** – “¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no

longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Why should we study biblical church leadership? Because Christ, as the head of the church, has revealed His will for the ordering of the church so that it might function in its most effective and fruitful form in the world for the sake of His glory.

What has Christ Revealed about the Ordering of the Church?

- 1) The church exists for the purpose of glorifying God.
 - a. **Ephesians 3:10** – “¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”
 - b. **Ephesians 3:22** – “²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
- 2) The church consists of a membership of believers who exercise the authority of the Kingdom of God. The essence of the church’s kingdom authority comes from its declaration of the gospel and its declaration regarding membership in the kingdom of God.
 - a. **The Assumption of Church Membership**
 - i. **Acts 2:47** – “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
 - ii. **Acts 5:11** – “¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”
 - iii. **Acts 6:3** – “³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”
 - b. **Declaration of the Gospel**
 - i. **Matthew 4:23** – “²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.”
 - ii. **Acts 1:3, 8** – “³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God... ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- iii. **Acts 5:42** – “⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”
- iv. **Acts 20:24-27** – “²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”
- v. **Acts 28:30-31** – “³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”
- vi. **Galatians 1:6-9** – “⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

c. Declaration of Kingdom Membership

- i. **Matthew 16:13-20** – “¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²⁰ Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.”
- ii. **Matthew 18:15-20** – “¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”
- iii. **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** – “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹²For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

d. Thus, church members play an indispensable role in the declaring what the gospel is and who has truly believed that gospel and enter into the kingdom of God. This is the chief function of all members of the body of Christ, and this function takes on multiple, distinct roles according to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon all believers.

3) Christ has distinguished and gifted some members within the church for the roles of leadership and service in the church. These roles correspond to the two formal offices of elder/overseer/pastor and deacon in the church.

a. Elder/Overseer/Pastor

i. The terms of “elder” and “overseer” are used interchangeable throughout the New Testament.

1. **Acts 20:17, 28** – “¹⁷Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him...²⁸Pay 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.”
2. **Titus 1:5, 7** – “and appoint elders in every town as I directed you...⁷For an overseer, as God’s steward...”
3. **1 Peter 5:1-2** – 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: ²shepherd 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;

4. In Greek, “elders” is *presbuteros* and “overseers” is *episkopos*. Sometimes, *episkopos* is translated as “bishop,” but it still refers to the same office in the church.
- ii. The term that is frequently translated as “pastor” or “shepherd” only occurs in Ephesians 4:11 and is coupled with the term *didaskolos* which is translated as “teacher.” However, the concept of “shepherding” which is associated with the term, “pastor,” occurs more frequently (Matt. 2:6, John 21:16, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2, Jude 12, Rev. 2:27, 7:17, 12:5, 19:15).
 - iii. In the New Testament, the **primary role** of the Elder/Overseer/Pastor is **caring for the church through ruling and preaching/teaching.**
 1. **Acts 20:28** – “²⁸Pay 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.”
 2. **1 Timothy 3:2-5** – “²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (The Greek term behind “manage” means “to lead, to stand before, to exercise a position of leadership, rule, direct for the sake of care”)
 3. **1 Timothy 5:17** – “¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”
 4. **2 Timothy 4:1-5** - “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”
 5. **Titus 1:9** – “⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”
 6. **Hebrews 13:17** – “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.”

7. **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13** – “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”
8. **1 Corinthians 16:15-16** – “¹⁵ Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints—¹⁶ be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.”
9. **1 Peter 5:2-4** – “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. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

b. Deacon

- i. The term “deacon” is a transliteration of the Greek word, “diakonos,” which, in general, means, “one who gets something done at the behest of a superior” or “an assistant to someone.” When used to refer to the office in the church, the term refers to “one who serves with the responsibility to care for the needs of believers.”
 1. **Acts 6:2-4** – “² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”
 2. **1 Timothy 3:8-13** – “⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”
- ii. The difference between the role of the elder/overseer/pastor and the role of deacon in the church is worth noting at this point. While the elder/overseer/pastor has a responsibility to lead primarily through ruling and teaching, the deacon has a responsibility to lead primarily through serving. As God originally intended for the church, the deacons were appointed to service to free the elders/overseers/pastors up for the ministry of the Word and prayer. At this point, there may be a temptation to conclude that the function of a deacon is insignificant, but nothing could be further from the truth. The role of the deacon is vital for the health of the church.