

# THE CHURCH'S UNIQUE ORGANIZATION

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## *Leadership in the Church*

### **Introduction**

→ Illust. – A bumper sticker that reads: “Don’t follow me. I’m lost too.” Motion does not always mean purpose. Be careful who you follow. They may not know where they are going.

Leader’s cap (Jerry Franz, newly elected president of the FEBC) – *“I’m their leader, which way did they go?”*

This morning I would like us to consider the unique way in which the church is organized. We are going to look at the issue of leadership in the church.

First we need to review a few things. The church is unique because it is not just another organization. It is a living organism, the body of the living Christ, here on earth. It is made up of people who have been washed clean by the blood of Christ and brought into relationship with Him. Membership in this unique body is based not on abilities, or position, or by having your name on a membership roll, but on faith.

Last week, we spoke about the unique objective of the church. The ultimate goal of the church is to “present everyone perfect (mature) in Christ.” (Col. 1:28) Our mission is to see people come to maturity of Christian life (a working faith, a lasting hope, a caring love); maturity in the understanding and use of spiritual gifts for the edifying and building up of the body; and maturity of Christian witness.

Now let us take a few moments this morning to look at the question of how leaders emerge and function in this unique body we call the church. We begin with the basis for leadership.

### **I. Its Leaders are Chosen on the Basis of CHARACTER**

Whenever church leaders are mentioned in the NT one of the things that is abundantly clear is that the basis for choosing and appointing leaders is that they must be people of character. Even if the position they are being appointed to seems to be an area of more practical min-

istry rather than “spiritual” ministry, yet they are to be people of godly character. Acts 6 – men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom; 1 Timothy 3 – above reproach, worthy of respect, a clear conscience.

I believe there are a couple of terms that we can use to help define this idea of character in the life of a leader. The first is ...

#### **A. Faithfulness**

This is probably the most central requirement for all servants of God. In speaking of those who have been entrusted with a position of responsibility, Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 4:2 – “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.”

Paul also told Timothy in his ministry in Ephesus, 2 Tim. 2:2 – “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful (reliable) men who will be able to teach others also.”

And to another pastor, Titus, Paul wrote regard leaders in the church, “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.” (Titus 1:9 ESV)

Faithfulness in understanding and holding to the truth of the Word of God, and faithfulness in their daily walk with God is central to the calling of any church leader.

#### **B. Fruitfulness**

By this, I mean the demonstration of character. Just as the fruit on a tree demonstrates the nature and character of that tree, so is our nature and character demonstrated by the outward fruit in our lives.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, spoke about the relationship between a tree and its fruit, relating it to the character and fruit in the life of a prophet of God.

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.” (Matthew 7:15-20 ESV)

You see, character is what is inside. That is where we need faithfulness. The fruit is what shows on the outside. There are several areas where that character needs to be seen in our lives. There must be a demonstration of godly character in relation to:

- God – In 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul uses the terms “above reproach” and “blameless”. In 1 Tim. 4:16 he says, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.” Our lives need to show a close relationship with God.
- Family – 1 Timothy 3:4-5
- Society – 1 Tim. 3:7
- Ministry itself – Servant leadership – Luke 22:25-27

Character is all-important in Christian leadership, because the leader must set the example for those who follow.

## II. Its Leaders are Chosen to MINISTER to People

The second thing we must consider is the purpose for leadership in the church. Leaders are chosen to minister to people. This takes us back to the truth about servant leadership. Leaders are put in place not to be admired or worshiped or to rule with absolute authority. They are to serve those for whom they are responsible. So what are the responsibilities of church leaders? There are plenty, but we will just mention a couple of areas.

Read 1 Pet 5:1-4 – mention the two designations given in v. 2 – shepherds and overseers. That basically sums it up.

### A. Shepherd the Flock

Compare to the task of a shepherd:

- Tend – caring for the needs of people. Concerned about the things that concern those who are under your care.
- Feed – meeting the spiritual needs. Seeing that people are receiving the spiritual nourishment that they need to grow as Christians.
- Protect – See 1 Tim. 6:20 - guard the flock from dangerous predators. Also guard the truth and consistency of your message.

### B. Oversee the Ministry

- Lead – provide direction and motivation. 2 Tim. 4:2 – Do the things necessary to bring people into a deeper life with Christ.

- Manage – there is a place for management in this whole area of leadership. Keeping all functions and activities of the body working and moving smoothly is art of the task of overseeing the ministry, and is a part of a leader’s responsibility.

There is one more area we must look at today. This is where we really get into some teaching. I want to give you a bit of a word study as we get into the idea that ...

## III. Its Leaders are Chosen for DIFFERENT types of Ministry

The Scriptures use a number of different words to describe the various leadership positions in the church. The first one we will consider is...

### A. Elders

Here I want to give you two Greek terms:

**πρεσβυτερω (presbuteros)** - elder - those who presided over or gave leadership to the assemblies (or churches). - See Titus 1:5-6

**επισκοπω (episkopos)** – bishop, overseer - the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church See Titus 1:7; 1 Tim. 1:2

These two terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament. They appear to be very similar in meaning and usage.

However, some would suggest this difference between the two terms:  
(1) The term “elder” stresses the **position** of this ministry in the church.  
(2) The term “overseer” stresses the **function** and **work** of an elder.

### B. Deacons

The second leadership position mentioned in Scripture is that of deacons. The Greek word is ...

**διακονω (diakonos)** - minister, servant, deacon

- one who executes the commands of another,

a) the servant of a king

b) a deacon, one who cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use

c) a waiter, one who serves food and drink

See 1 Tim. 3:8 – consider Acts 6 – men selected to oversee the distribution of food to the widows.

## C. Pastors

There is a third area of ministry talked about in regard to church leadership and that is the term “pastor”. The Greek word is...

**ποιμην (poimen)** – shepherd 17, pastor 1; 18 AV

1) a herdsman, esp. a shepherd

2) metaph. - the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church; the overseers of the Christian assemblies

Ephesians 4:11 – “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,”

This verse is the only place that word is translated as “pastor.” Everywhere else it is translated as “shepherd.” Clearly this is the task of church leaders, as we have already seen—shepherd the flock of God.

It would also seem that, for the most part, the role of pastor is similar to that of an elder. In many assemblies the pastor is considered to function in that capacity.

Review: Elders – overseers; Deacons – ministers, servants; Pastor/teachers – shepherds

## Conclusion

As we conclude this morning, there is one other consideration to think about when it comes to church leadership. How are these leaders chosen and appointed? Let me just say that there is little to indicate that they were elected by a majority vote in the early church.

As you read the NT, it would seem that in most situations, leaders were appointed, based on a recognition by the church of their character and God-given leadership. Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in the churches throughout Crete. Paul himself appointed elders in many of the churches he established. Deacons were selected by the church body and then approved and then assigned by the elders.

However it is done, it should not be just a popular vote approach, but true recognition of God’s choosing.

Close by encouraging people to pray for their leaders – Pastor, board members, one another in your various areas of leadership.