

The Doctrines Of The Faith



What The Bible Says About...

ECCLESIOLOGY The Doctrine of the Church

"A Study In Truth"

PASTOR ART KOHL

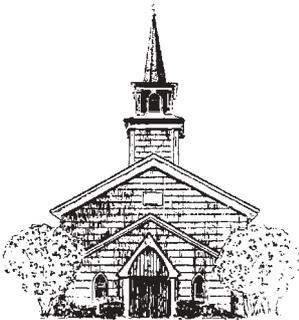
Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church

by Pastor Art Kohl

Printed In The United States of America
September 2005

Scripture verses in this booklet are from the
King James Holy Bible.



Published by
Faith Bible Baptist Church

8688 South Main Street
Eden, New York 14057

www.fbbc.com

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Order No. 705
9-22-05

The Doctrines Of The Faith — A Study In Truth Series

Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church

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I. Introduction:

The Greek word for church, found 117 times in the New Testament, is “ekklesia”. It means, “a called out assembly, meeting, congregation. A community of members on earth, saints in Heaven, or both.” Compare 2 Corinthians 1:1 and Hebrews 12:23. Thus ecclesiology means the doctrine of the church.

The word “church” is not found in the Old Testament, although Moses leading God’s people through the wilderness, the congregation was a type of the church (See Acts 7:38).

The word “ekklesia” is translated “assembly” on three occasions in the New Testament: Acts 19:32, 39, 41. This stresses to us the need of assembling with the church and not just joining the church.

Once the word “churches” is translated from a Greek work “hierosules” which means a “temple spoiler.” In it’s text in 2 Corinthians 11:8 you can see why a different word is used.

The word “church” is found in the New Testament 80 times. The word “churches” is found 37 times for a total of 117 times. Thus there are many churches, not just one.

The church is a group of saved, born-again Christians, called out of the world for the purpose of assembling together.

As we study the word “church” in the context of Scriptures, we come to the conclusion that it has two working definitions:

First, the visible local church (most references). Second, the body of Christ (all believers worldwide who are members of Christ’s body)

The great majority of scriptures deal with the local New Testament church. Here are a few in which the word “church” or “churches” are found. Notice how clearly they denote a local (not universal) assembly of believers:

“And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they **assembled themselves with the church**, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26).

“Now there were **in the church** that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” (Acts 13:1).

“And when they were come, and had **gathered the church together**, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” (Acts 14:27).

“Unto the **church of God which is at Corinth**, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

“The **churches of Asia** salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.” (1 Corinthians 16:19).

“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on

the **churches of Macedonia;**" (2 Corinthians 8:1).

"For ye, brethren, became followers of the **churches of God** which in **Judaea** are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:" (1 Thessalonians 2:14).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7).

Each local church is a "whole church," not a part of some "universal church" or "mother church."

"Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with **the whole church**, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:" (Acts 15:22).

"Gaius mine host, and of **the whole church**, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother." (Romans 16:23).

"If therefore **the whole church** be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).

Every believer should be added to the local church and faithfully attend and support that church. They should discover their spiritual gift(s) (Romans 12:6-8) then develop those gifts and become qualified to use them. They should attach themselves to some ministry(ies) where their gift can be used and go to work using their gifts to edify the body of Christ in some capacity. They should uphold the standards of their church while working there. The Pastor should oversee the standards and the behavior of all church workers (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 13:7,17,24).

All members should be involved in the great commission of preaching the gospel to every creature, getting converts baptized, and discipling those converts. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Acts 8:4)

II. The Biblical Basis For The Church

Let us look at the Biblical basis for the church, first a general overview, then the specifics.

A. The church Is founded upon the Rock, that is on the doctrine of the Lordship of Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Rock, not Peter. See Matthew 16:13-19. The word "Peter" in verse 18 is the Greek word "Petros" which means "a small stone." Four words later is the word "rock" (again verse 18) which is the Greek word "Petra," which means "a massive rock." Conclusion: Peter and the Rock are two completely different items. The rock that Jesus is referring to is Peter's statement in verse 16, which deals with the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ. All scriptures compared tell us that Christ is the Rock, not Peter:

"Whosoever **cometh to me**, and heareth my sayings, and doeth

them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the **foundation on a rock**: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was **founded upon a rock**.” (Luke 6:47-48).

“Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 9:32-33).

“And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ**.” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” (1 Peter 2:7-8).

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, **Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

On the contrary, Peter (petros - a small stone) was renamed by Jesus himself. His new name was Cephas - John 1:42, which means a stone. Peter is often referred to as Cephas by the early church:

“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:12).

“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;” (1 Corinthians 3:22).

“Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5).

“And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:” (1 Corinthians 15:5).

“And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” (Galatians 2:9).

Conclusion: Peter is not “The Rock,” just part of the foundation of the Christian faith. He is to be remembered as “a small stone” or a “stone.” The church was purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of **God**, which he **hath purchased with his own blood**” (Acts 20:28). How can anyone say then that Peter is the owner, head, or rock of the church?

B. Not only is Jesus the Rock on which the church is built, He is the Builder of the church

“...I will build my church;” (Matthew 16:18).

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:1-5).

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” (Psalm 127:1).

“Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6).

Christ uses the people of the church to do His building. He has given to us authority. Notice the word “thee” in Matthew 16:19. “Thee” is referring to the church, not Peter. Notice the authority of the church in Matthew 18:18: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Jesus builds His church by giving the keys of the kingdom to the church: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Keys are a symbol of authority and responsibility. Soulwinning is taking the keys of the Kingdom to sinners to see if they want them. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Revelation 1:18).

Illustration: If you have keys to our church, you are probably in some position of authority or responsibility. You also have a responsibility of taking care of those keys and keeping the building secure. We as Christians have the authority of the Gospel and the responsibility of using it. Jesus builds His church through our Gospel efforts.

C. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” (Ephesians 5:23).

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.” (Colossians 1:18).

Of all people, it was Peter who defined Christ clearly as the “Shepherd,” “Bishop,” and “Chief Shepherd.”

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:21-25).

“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:4).

It is Christ who loved the church and gave Himself for it: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” (Ephesians 5:25).

D. The church was started with the baptism of Jesus Christ

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17).

“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11).

“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22).

Jesus was the first Member. All members since have been added by baptism - see Acts 2:41-47 and John 4:1,2. Jesus did not need to be saved, He was sinless. But He gave us an example to follow by being baptized at age 30. **After** His baptism He began His public ministry and the organization of His Church. We are to follow this pattern.

Also notice that by Matthew 16+18 the “Church” is already mentioned, not at Pentecost. Converts were “added to the Church” at Pentecost (Acts 2:41), they did not start the Church.

The baptism of John was not his idea but was commissioned by God.

Therefore Jesus submitted to it to fulfill all the law of God. John's baptism was of God:

"And I knew him not: but **he that sent me to baptize with water**, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (John 1:33).

"But the Pharisees and lawyers **rejected the counsel of God** against themselves, **being not baptized of him.**" (Luke 7:30).

E. Jesus Christ was the first Pastor

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the **Shepherd and Bishop** of your souls." (1 Peter 2:21-25).

"And when the **chief Shepherd** shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:4).

F. His church was a church of people

He had many disciples, of whom He chose 12 and called them apostles. "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;" (Luke 6:12-13).

He didn't just have 12 from the beginning of His ministry, but many (See John 4:1). One example: Barsabas and Matthias were with Christ as long as the 12 apostles. See Acts 1:15-23.

Jesus sent out "other" 70 also. "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come." (Luke 10:1).

Many women followed Him from Galilee (the beginning of His ministry) to Golgotha (His crucifixion). "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:" (Matthew 27:55). "There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." (Mark 15:40-41).

Multitudes from many regions followed Him. "And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." (Matthew 4:25).

After Jesus ascended into Heaven, 120 of his disciples met in prayer for 10 straight days. This became the core of His church. "Then re-

turned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)" (Acts 1:12-14).

G. His church had leadership

After a night of prayer, He chose all of His disciples and named 12 apostles: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;" (Luke 6:12-13).

These 12 were ordained (set apart publicly), that they should be with Him and live in His presence, serving Him and preparing for the ministry. "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach," (Mark 3:13-14).

Of the 12, three in particular became leaders of the rest: Peter, James & John. See Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; 13:3; 14:33, Luke 8:51. These were specially trusted and entrusted people.

H. His church had a financial program

Two of the disciples were involved in this:

1. Judas Iscariot, the Treasurer

"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." (John 12:6).

"For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor." (John 13:29).

The money was used to meet the needs of the ministry and to help the poor.

2. Peter

"And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened

his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” (Matthew 17:24-27).

I. His church had a visitation program

1. Leadership went out

“And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;” (Mark 6:7).

2. Others went out two-by-two

“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come ... And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” (Luke 10:1,17).

3. Common folk preached

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4).

4. Jesus went out

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” (Luke 4:18).

“And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.” (Luke 4:43).

See also John 4:4-42.

Everyone was involved! They preached the Gospel and helped people.

J. His church baptized converts

“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)” (John 4:1-2). The baptisms were performed by the ordained.

K. His church had a preaching and teaching ministry

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.” (Matthew 11:1).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The first century Church continued this pattern: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” (Acts 5:42).

L. His church conducted public services

“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto

them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:12-16).

These services included outcasts and children.

M. If needed, there was church government regarding discipline

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matthew 18:17).

N. Unfortunately, there were quitters in the Church

"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (John 6:66).

III. The Specifics Of The Local Church

A. Local churches are saved, baptized people who assemble together

"Not forsaking the **assembling of ourselves together**, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25).

Notice the words "come together" in the following verses:

"If therefore the whole church be **come together** into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).

"How is it then, brethren? when ye **come together**, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Corinthians 14:26).

"For first of all, when ye **come together** in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." (1 Corinthians 11:18).

"When ye **come together** therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper." (1 Corinthians 11:20).

"Wherefore, my brethren, when ye **come together** to eat, tarry one for another." (1 Corinthians 11:33).

Sometimes these churches were in large houses. Often they were in homes: "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." (1 Corinthians 16:19). See also Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2.

B. These churches are to be away from our homes

(Unless, of course, the church is started in our house) "And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands **at home**: for it is a shame for women to speak **in the church**." (1 Corinthians 14:35).

C. The meetings are to be conducted decently and in order

“Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

In Apostolic days this meant:

- A Psalm
- A Doctrine
- A Tongue
- A Revelation
- An Interpretation

“How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” (1 Corinthians 14:26). Also examine verses 27-33. Things were to be done orderly.

D. Collections are to be made on Sundays

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have **given order to the churches** of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

However, the church should assemble often times during the week: “And they, continuing **daily** with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church **daily** such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:46-47). See also Hebrews 10:25; Acts 5:42.

E. God calls a Bishop (Pastor) to rule the local church

By rule we mean “oversee, organize, administrate, lead by example, govern.” It does not mean “dominate” (see 2 Corinthians 1:24).

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” (1 Timothy 3:1-5). See also Hebrews 13:7,17,24 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

Bishops and elders are sometimes a reference to the same person: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and **ordain elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For **a bishop** must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;” (Titus 1:5-7).

Jesus referred to the Bishop of a church as the angel. Example: “Unto the **angel** of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;” (Revelation 2:1). The word angel means “messenger.”

Some Biblical examples of Pastors:

1. Timothy

Timothy was the first Bishop of the church of Ephesus. “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen. <The

second epistle unto Timotheus, **ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians**, was written from Rome, when Paul was brought before Nero the second time.>” (Subscription at the end of 2 Timothy.)

2. Titus

Titus was the first Bishop of the church of Crete. “All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen. <It was written to Titus, **ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians**, from Nicopolis of Macedonia.>” (Subscription at the end of Titus). Bishops are ordained men.

F. God sends other men to help in leadership

These have different titles:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;” (Ephesians 4:11).

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:” (Philippians 1:1).

Moses did the same thing when he led Israel. Compare Exodus 18:19-27 and Numbers 11:16-17. Seventy men were under him, helping him to oversee the 2-3 million Jews.

The early church did this also. See Acts 6:1-7.

G. The Bishop must be qualified

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:6-9).

This is an “office.” He is an officer of the church.

H. The Deacons must be qualified

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the

faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 3:8-13). This is also an “office.”

Deacons are not leaders of the spiritual vision of the church, but are servants to the carnal needs of the congregation.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:1-7).

The Deacons and caring people in the congregation keep the Pastors (Bishops, Elders) free to focus on the spiritual – especially prayer and the ministry of the Word.

There are others given to the church to assist pastors in meeting the spiritual needs of the church:

- Apostles: Literally “one sent.” Missionaries.
- Prophets: Preachers. Men who preach, but are not necessarily ordained.
- Evangelists: Those who focus on evangelizing, edifying and helping.
- Teachers: Both men and women who focus on teaching all ages, including children.

All these positions are explained in Ephesians 4:11-16. These are all to work together to edify the saints for the work of the ministry. Women teaching women is implied in the pastoral epistle of Titus, chapter 2, verses 3 & 4.

I. The government of the local church

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd of the flock. He is to have preeminence in all things. The Pastor is not to be preeminent. No church member, man or woman, should be a “place-seeker” for preeminence. See 3 John 9-10.

2. The Holy Spirit is to direct the church

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). See also Acts 4:31; Acts 5:3-4; Acts 9:31; and Acts 13:1-4.

3. The Pastor is the undershepherd

He should never lord over God’s heritage but be an example to the flock. The congregation should follow him as he follows the Lord.

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

No “clergyman” should ever think himself above the congregation but a servant to them. Jesus, the Head of the church, hates the deeds and the doctrines of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6,15). The word “Nicolaitan” means “to have power over the people.” People should willingly submit to the leaders over them in the church, not be forced into submission.

4. The whole congregation should be filled and controlled by the Holy Ghost

The Holy Spirit says special things to those who attend church that can never be heard anywhere else. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what **the Spirit saith unto the churches**; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Revelation 2:11). See also Revelation 2:17,24 and Revelation 3:6,13,22.

The congregation should esteem it’s leadership very highly in love for their work’s sake. “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

The government of the local church rests entirely with the members of the body, being separate and independent of all other churches in matter of authority and control, being answerable only to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” (Matthew

18:15) See also 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15.

5. Each church is to be independent of other churches, yet dependent on God

The church should not be under the control of a conference, denomination or fellowship. Each church should be independent of man's control, but dependent on God's leadership. The church should be autonomous. It should be indigenous but have a world wide vision.

The church is a theocracy not a democracy. God is to have the first and final word in all matters of faith, practice, vision and direction of His church.

Every church is different in its personality. Compare the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 2 & 3. Also see the different characteristics of the churches mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:1; Acts 11:26; Philippians 4:15-19; Colossians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 16:1; and 1 Thessalonians 2:14; Acts 17:11.

Each church, however, can learn from the example of other churches: "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea." (Colossians 4:16).

J. The Ordinances of the Church

There are two ordinances of the church – baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism

The Scriptures teach a believer's baptism by immersion. In baptism, the believer testifies that he died with Christ to sin, that he was buried with Him, and that he has risen to a new life in Him. Read the examples of baptism in Acts 8:12; Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:3-10; Matthew 3:15-16; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 16:33; and Acts 10:48. This ordinance is in no way a condition for salvation.

2. The Lord's Supper

This ordinance is for believers only and is a commemoration of the Lord's death and our continual fellowship with Him. It is a solemn event and Scripture is quite clear that it should not be entered into casually, but only after careful self-examination under the searchlight of the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 and Matthew 26:20-30.

K. The Inclusion of the Church

All born-again, baptized believers are welcome to attend and fellowship in the Lord's church. These members should keep themselves right with God and all other believers and try to be right with the unbelievers of the world also as much as they possibly can.

The church should be careful that it does not become "family-centered" or cater to the rich, educated, etc. It should be all-inclusive to the rich, poor, children, adults, married, divorced, single, widows, widowers, all

nationalities, all ethnic groups, all skin colors, all languages, etc. “The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.” (Proverbs 22:2). See also Romans 1:16; Colossians 3:11; Romans 12:5; Galatians 3:28.

L. The Exclusion of the Church

The church is a meeting place and ministry to believers, to equip them to edify each other and then go out of the church into the world to reach unbelievers. The saints are not told to bring unbelievers in but to go out to the lost and reach them. The church should be separated from unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14-18) but not isolated from them (John 17:15-18).

The church should also disfellowship itself from certain believers who are not walking worthy, such as:

1. Fornicators

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;” (Ephesians 5:3). Also read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.

2. Heretics

“A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject;” (Titus 3:10).

3. Covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, extortioners

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” (1 Corinthians 5:11).

4. Unrepentent brothers who have been properly confronted

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” (Matthew 18:15-17).

5. Those who cause division and offenses contrary to the sound doctrine of the church

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17). Note: Secure a copy of your church’s Doctrinal Statement and Church Covenant. See also 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 John 10.

6. The disorderly

“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). The example given in this context is that of a healthy man who will not work.

**“Study to shew thyself
approved unto God,
a workman
that needeth not
to be ashamed,
rightly dividing
the word of truth.”**

2 Timothy 2:15