

Who Makes up the Church? (Part Two) (Acts 2:41-42)

Last month, as we continued to cover the subject of what a Bible-believing church is, we learned several truths about those that make up Jesus Christ's church. We learned that the church membership ought to be comprised of those that believe in biblical salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) and have been biblically baptized by immersion to profess their faith in Jesus Christ. As we narrow the subject down a bit, we must acknowledge that God gives each local church two offices of leadership to minister to the church family and lead Christ's work on Earth.

II. The Church Leadership

It is clear that the Bible teaches that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. In other words, every person that comes into God's family through salvation has equal favor with God and receives an equal portion of His Spirit. Just so, every person that comes into our congregation is equally welcome to worship the Lord with us, as we learn about and serve Him, no matter their gender, race, or background. However, there must be structure to any assembly, otherwise chaos and disorder exist. Our God is one that does all things decently and in order (**I Corinthians 14:40**); therefore He created two positions of leadership in the local church: the pastor and deacon.

First, we must understand that the head of every local church is not the pastor, but the Lord Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18**). Jesus purchased the church with His own blood and directs His assemblies through His Word and Spirit, as He sees fit. It is the job of every pastor to lead the church to follow the leading of the Lord Jesus.

Three words exist regarding the pastor in Scripture that define his function and position: *pastor*, *bishop*, and *elder*. *Pastor* is the most commonly used word for a church leader today and means *shepherd*. Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the church and appoints every pastor to shepherd His flock in His stead, until He comes and reclaims them for His own (**John 10:11-16**). Paul and Peter both spoke to pastors as shepherds in **Acts 20** and **I Peter 5**. Some of their shepherding duties include feeding the flock of God through preaching and teaching (**I Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28**), doing the work of the ministry out of love for Christ (**I Peter 5:2**), being godly examples before the flock (**I Peter 5:3; I Timothy 4:12**), and watching over the spiritual welfare of the flock (**Acts 20:28-31**).

Bishop means *overseer* or *administrator*. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus regarding the qualifications of a bishop in their respective books, outlining how a pastor ought to act as the administrator of the church (**Titus 1; I Timothy 3**). The pastor is responsible to the Lord Jesus for everything that occurs in the church, from the doctrine taught to running the daily operations, and will give an account to Him (**Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-31**) for his faithfulness or disobedience.

Elder is the most common term for a pastor was an interchangeable term in the New Testament with *bishop* and *pastor*. The pastor as an elder is a spiritual leader in the church that is not new to the faith. This means that he is not easily swayed by the world, flesh, and Devil, and especially not money (**I Timothy 3:1-7; I Peter 5:2**). He also has a proven walk with the Lord and is able to disciple those of his flock through preaching, teaching, godly counsel, and example.

Second, we come to the office of the deacon. This office was created out of necessity by the apostles, when the physical needs of the assembly were taking them away from their spiritual obligations (**Acts 6:1-7**). The word *deacon* means *servant* or *minister*. The deacon is literally the servant of the pastor and the church, who works to relieve the pastor of duties that take him away from the ministry of the Word and prayer. The Lord Jesus is the greatest example of a servant and declares that the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven will be the servants of all (**Mark 10:42-45**). As the pastor is the servant of the church, so also is the deacon.

The duties of the deacon can include administrative work, property maintenance, preparation for church services, and whatever else would take the pastor away from his God-given duties. The qualifications of this office are outlined by Paul and are vital to the health of the church (**I Timothy 3:8-13**), because of the spiritual maturity required. The deacon is a helper and an assistant. When this position is executed properly, the church is able to function more efficiently. The end of **Acts 6** tells us that the sacrifice and humility of the men chosen for this position allowed the church to produce great fruit through the increased preaching of the Gospel!

The membership of the local church ought to be made up of those that are saved, baptized, and have a proven desire to follow the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:42**). Amongst that membership are to be two offices: the pastor and deacon. The pastor must be a servant leader that leads the church to follow the Lord Jesus. He is to be a shepherd, administrator, and spiritual leader. The deacon is to be a servant leader that helps the pastor with the duties of the ministry that would take him away from the ministry of the Word and prayer (**Acts 6:1-4**). When the church understands and obeys these biblical truths, it is able to go forward for the Lord in unity and the power of the Holy Spirit.

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