

**GOD'S BLUEPRINT
FOR
THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH**

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GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Many of us have the desire to be able to participate in a New Testament Church. We read about the Church in Acts and think how wonderful it would be if we had a Church like that today. The early Church was full of the power of God and the members had genuine love for one another. It is easy for us to fantasize about how wonderful it all was.

What we forget about is the fact that the Church was born in the midst of conflict. The early Church was severely persecuted. There were no pew sitters in those days. To be baptized was to publicly declare your allegiance to Jesus. Those who followed Jesus were totally committed to the Lord. They had to be to withstand the harassment of the religious and societal leaders. This kept the Church pure. The uncommitted and the insincere were kept from the Church by the persecution that the believers received. There was no possibility of compromise for those who were true to the faith.

This changed when Constantine had his so-called conversion to Christianity and marched his army through lakes to baptize them. Christianity became socially acceptable. People became "Christians" in name only without the new birth and the commitment to the Lordship of Jesus. The result of this was a Church that compromised with the world. Its structure became like that of the pagans (because so many pagans came into the church without having their hearts changed). Constantine created a priest-laity organization with all of the supporting accoutrements and rituals resulting in professional ministers and an audience of spectators.

Because of this, it became quite acceptable to be a pew sitter. It is as if no one really expects you to do anything or even have your life changed. Some have called today's church structure "Club Church". In many ways, this seems to be true. The Church does act like any other social club.

This has resulted in a "mixed multitude" within the ranks of the Church. When Moses led the children of Israel from Egypt the scriptures tell us that a mixed multitude (a mixture of people of non-Jewish descent) left with them¹. These were those that thought things might be better for them if they went with Moses rather than staying in Egypt. They had no stake in the Promised Land or commitment to the God of Israel. Their only concern was for their own welfare.

The presence of the mixed multitude caused many problems for the children of Israel during their trek in the wilderness. During difficult times, it was always the mixed multitude that complained and lusted after other things and would cause the children of Israel to also complain and become

¹ Exodus 12:38

unsatisfied with God's provision. The mixed multitude in Club Church has performed the same disservice to the True Church of God causing confusion and dissatisfaction with the provision of the Lord.

Many of us have become discouraged over the seeming lack of spirituality, love, care, or concern for the other members of the Church and the seeming oblivious attitude toward the requirements of God both individually and corporately. Maybe we have a problem because the Church is not functioning in the manner that it was designed. Jesus said He would build His Church. He is the one with the blueprints, not us. Maybe we need to seek to understand what the New Testament Church was all about. Maybe we need to re-think all that we know of the Church in order to recognize and deal with the various traditions of men that have crept into the Church since the first century.

Lest we become disillusioned with the Church, we need to remember some basic facts:

- God doesn't change--He is the same yesterday, today and forever.²
- God is no respecter of persons--we all have equal opportunity before Him.³
- The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church.⁴
- The Holy Ghost is as available today as He was on the Day of Pentecost.⁵

In the light of these facts it becomes apparent that the problem is not with God but with us. We are the ones that have changed when compared with the early Christians. We don't have the same level of commitment and dependency on the Lord as they did. We don't have the same burning desire for evangelization and proclamation of the Word of God as they did. We don't have the depth of love and care for one another as members together of the grace of Christ as they did.

What then is needed for us to begin to function in a manner like the New Testament Church as depicted in the book of Acts? What areas must we address? It would appear from the Scriptures that at the Lord's return the Church will look more like it did in the first century than it does now. What has to take place to bring this about?

If we desire a New Testament Church, then there are five things that we must have:

1. New Testament Life
2. New Testament Power
3. New Testament People,
4. New Testament Government, and
5. New Testament Discipline.

²Hebrews 13:8

³Acts 10:34

⁴Colossians 1:18

⁵Acts 2:30

Somehow, over the years, these five areas have deteriorated or have been lost completely to the people of God. To the point that the modern Church is weak and anemic, confused and divided, and compromised with the World Systems.

However, God has promised us that there will be a restoration of all things⁶, which we believe to also include all things that relate to the plans and purposes of the Lord's Church.

God's original purpose for man has not changed. He intends to restore all things according to His purpose that man might fulfill the calling of God. When restoration is initiated, there are two aspects to be considered:

- ➔ Putting things back into their right place, and
- ➔ Putting things back into their right condition.

Anyone who has ever restored an old house that has deteriorated from neglect can immediately understand the need of putting things in their right place and right condition. In many ways, God's house has been neglected; but, now is being restored. Proper restoration requires the original blueprints or architectural drawings to make sure that the original design is followed.

The only design we have for the Church is in the book of Acts with some elaboration of functions in the Epistles. We need to study these carefully and seek the Lord for understanding and implementation procedures.

NEW TESTAMENT LIFE

The first of our requirements for a new testament Church is by far the most important. New Testament Life is necessary before any of the other aspects of the New Testament Church can function as the Lord intended. This type of life only comes from God.

We think of life differently than the way the Bible presents it. We think that if we are breathing then we are "alive", i.e., that we have life. While this may be true biologically, it certainly is not true spiritually. Let's consider the difference between "natural life" and "spiritual life".

To do this we need to go back to the beginning of man's life—to Genesis and the creation of Adam.

Genesis 2:7 NASB

(7) Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

When God made man He breathed into him "the breath of lives" (the original is plural—*lives*). This implies that there was more than one type of life in Adam (which is why Adam could *die* and still remain *alive*, as we shall see in a moment). Adam becoming a living being (literally *soul*), which manifested one aspect of the breath of life in man. This appears to be a type of life that was unique in all of God's creation.

⁶Acts 3:10-21

God told Adam about the tree of knowledge of good and evil and said, "...for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."⁷ We all know that Adam ate of the tree and yet continued to live for many years after that act before he died physically. So, when he ate of the tree, what died then? His *spiritual* life, i.e., the type of life that was a part of God's life. Without this continuous life-flow from God, Adam became *spiritually* dead with no hope of recovery except by the promise of God.

A simple way of looking at this concept is in terms of life being designed for its habitat. Our soul type of life is made for this earthly habitat or environment while our spirit type of life is made for God's habitat or environment. Paul talks about this contrast between the two types of life in First Corinthians chapter fifteen.

He first speaks of the different types of "flesh" and how there is a difference between men, animals, fish and birds. Then he contrasts celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies. He does this to draw a parallel between our natural bodies and our resurrected bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:39-44 NASB

- (39) All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.
- (40) There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another.
- (41) There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.
- (42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*;
- (43) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;
- (44) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

We have a natural body (full of natural or soulish life) while we live in this earthly habitat. However, we need a spiritual body (full of spiritual life) when we live in our future habitat. Paul explains that we got the soul life from Adam (the first man) but we get the spirit life from the last Adam (Jesus).

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 NASB

- (45) So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.
- (46) However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.
- (47) The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.
- (48) As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

⁷ Genesis 2:17

(49) Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

These two types of life are so different that Paul says that our natural life is unable to inherit the Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:50 NASB

(50) Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

You see, what we are in the natural was not designed for the environment of the Kingdom of God. *We must have spiritual life.*

Spiritual life is so important to the Kingdom of God that Jesus told Nicodemus⁸, "... **Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" When Adam sinned, we lost spiritual life. We can only regain it (be born again) by believing on Jesus (the last Adam that became a quickening spirit).

What are the characteristics of this type of life? The scriptures only describe it in one way—eternal. This is the type of life that Jesus manifested according to the Apostle John:

1 John 1:2 NASB

(2) and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

1 John 5:20 NASB

(20) And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Jesus is eternal life and has made eternal life available to us. It is eternal life which makes us capable of participating in the environment of the Kingdom of God. (Remember, the Church is a part of the Kingdom of God and is the habitat of New Testament Christians.)

Some confusion results in the natural when too many professing Christians do not manifest eternal life. As a matter of fact, the Church seems to have forgotten how to recognize eternal life when we see it. However, John makes it clear what is not eternal life.

1 John 3:15 NASB

(15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Anyone who hates his brother is categorized as a murderer and is void of eternal life. When hate is harbored among the people of God it destroys the spiritual habitat of the Kingdom of God.

Which brings us full circle to the requirement of God that we love one another just like He has loved us.

John 13:34-35 NASB

⁸ John 3:3

(34) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

(35) "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The life of the New Testament Church expresses itself as love. Where we find true love (the God kind), we find true life. The converse is also true: where we find true life (the God kind), we find true love.

The secret is one of *expression*. As the people of God we need to learn how to let the life of God in us express itself in love. How do we do this?

James gives us the key.

James 3:8-12 NASB

(8) But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison.

(9) With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God;

(10) from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.

(11) Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*?

(12) Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

We have one opening (the mouth) from which flows two types of things: blessing and cursing. Things should not be this way. James goes on to explain that a fountain or spring cannot produce two different types of water: salt and fresh. Neither can a fig tree produce olives. It is simply not possible. Therefore, if the tongue is producing two different types of communication: blessing and cursing, then there must be two different sources. We can conclude that there are two different springs within us: one which produces sweet water (blessing) and one which produces bitter water (cursing).

These two different springs correspond to the two different types of life within us: the natural life (the old nature) and the spiritual life (the new nature). Whichever spring has water drawn from it will increase while the other decreases. This is true in the spiritual as well as the natural.

Jesus told the woman at the well:

John 4:13-14 NASB

(13) Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;

(14) but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

This makes it clear that the Life that comes from Jesus is like a well or spring and as such should flow out from us. This was made clear a little later when Jesus said,

John 7:38 NASB

(38) "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

New Testament Life expresses itself in a number of ways—love, unity, humbleness, compassion, patience, preferring one another, and many other similar attributes of those who truly belong to God.

NEW TESTAMENT POWER

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came like a rushing wind upon the disciples that were gathered in the upper room. This is recorded in detail in the second chapter of Acts⁹ and is a momentous event. It was the fulfillment of prophecy because until then the Holy Spirit was not poured out on all flesh but only came upon a select few like the Old Testament Prophets.¹⁰ Now, through the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was available to all.

Jesus emphasized the importance of this event before He ascended into Heaven. In the first chapter of Acts¹¹, He told His disciples to wait for the Promise of the Father (which He had earlier made clear to them was the coming of the Holy Ghost).¹² He said that they would receive power when the Holy Ghost came. After receiving power, they were to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. In other words, evangelization would require the power of the Holy Spirit and they were to wait and not go until they received it.

There has been some confusion over this because some people have equated the *empowering* of the Spirit with the *regeneration* of the Spirit. You have to be born again before you can be empowered, but the new birth doesn't necessarily empower you. The Scriptures draw a distinction between being born again and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. This contrast is clear in the eighth chapter of Acts which details Phillip's trip to Samaria.

Philip did the work of an evangelist. As a matter of fact, his is the only example in the Scriptures of the work of an evangelist. When he went to Samaria, he preached Christ to the people. There was deliverance, healing and great joy among them. They believed and were baptized in water. They did all of the things that we do today to become a Christian.¹³

The people of Samaria received Jesus under the Ministry of Philip, the evangelist. This chapter of Acts provides us with the only details of the ministry of an evangelist recorded in the Bible. These are the results of an evangelistic ministry:

- 1) the preaching of Christ and the Kingdom of God,
- 2) deliverance from evil spirits,

⁹Acts 2:1-5,

¹⁰Acts 2:15-21

¹¹Acts 1:4-9

¹²John 14:26

¹³Acts 8:5-12

- 3) healing of the body,
- 4) great miracles,
- 5) great joy,
- 6) belief and water baptism.

It becomes readily obvious that what we call an evangelist today is quite a bit different from what the Scriptures call an evangelist. To perform the work of an evangelist requires the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to wait to get the power of the Spirit before going to evangelize the world.

Today, many evangelists go out to preach without the Holy Spirit, usually because they don't understand the work of the evangelist. They take the form without the power. It is no wonder then that we don't get the same results that Phillip did. An evangelist without the power of the Holy Spirit is simply an exhorter. The body of Christ needs exhorters; they perform a valuable service. However, evangelists are needed even more because the fields are white, ready for harvest. Jesus said that the Word would be confirmed with signs following. When the Word is preached by an evangelist then through the power of the Holy Spirit signs should follow as it did with Phillip.

Even though the people of Samaria had believed and were baptized (became Christians) under the ministry of Phillip, they had not received all that God had for them. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent to them Peter and John to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Therefore, even though the Samaritans were Christians (they had believed and were baptized) they had not received the Holy Ghost. When they did receive, it was by the laying on of hands of Peter and John. The Samaritans became believers under the ministry of Phillip, the evangelist, and received the Holy Spirit under the completely different ministry of Peter and John.

Another example of different time frames for the new birth and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is evident in the lives of the twelve disciples. When were the disciples born again? It had to be after Jesus shed His blood, that is, under the New Covenant. In John 20: 22-23 Jesus breathes on his disciples and tells them to receive the Holy Ghost and if they remit their sins then they are remitted. (I believe that this is the beginning point of the Church not the Day of Pentecost. It was the Kingdom of God that came in power at Pentecost. For more on this see [The Kingdom and the Church](#))

This picture of Jesus breathing on His disciples is a direct corollary to creation when God breathed on Adam¹⁵. In each case life came from God and a new birth resulted. Also their sins were remitted which occurs when we are born again. I believe that this is what occurred. Later Jesus told them to wait for the Holy Ghost so that they would receive power. Only after that were they to be witnesses to the uttermost part of the earth.

If we want a New Testament Church, then first we have to receive New Testament power. It is the Holy Ghost that gives us the ability to live the Christian life and the power to do the works of

¹⁴Acts 8:14-17

¹⁵Genesis 2:7

Jesus and even greater works than He did¹⁶. It is the Holy Ghost that brings to us the reality of the Kingdom of God.

NEW TESTAMENT PEOPLE

In today's American society, we have religious freedom and tolerance. As a consequence, there is no stigma associated with professing our religious beliefs. There are very few social repercussions for being associated with Christian groups. Because of this, becoming a Christian or "joining" a church requires little commitment, almost no sacrifice, and only a small necessity for changing one's lifestyle. The result is a social church filled with compromise, ignorance of the ways of God, and with a lack of commitment in the lives of the people.

This wasn't true in the first century of the church. Persecution came from every side. There were business, social and political problems associated with identification as a Christian. Converts assumed the risk of losing everything when they became Christians. As a result, a person was whole-heartedly committed to Jesus when he was converted. There was no fence straddling or compromise or casual church attendance. Baptism was a public confession of conversion and a visual demonstration of one's identification with those who followed Jesus.

The early Christians took the teachings of Jesus about loving one another very seriously. Even to the point of not counting their possessions as their own but counting them in common so that there could be an equality in the body and no one would have need.¹⁷ They sacrificed for each other, being more concerned for the welfare of their brothers and sisters in the Lord than with their own needs. These were people that allowed God to do a deep work in their hearts so that the love of God was spread abroad from them.

Jesus told his disciples that others would know that they were His followers by their love for one another.¹⁸ The kind of self-sacrificing love to which Jesus referred is impossible to fake. It is contrary to the natural inclination of the world and has to be worked into your heart by the Holy Spirit. Jesus by His words and life clearly demonstrated this kind of Love.

In the natural we have limits to the actions that we put with love. One has to be worthy of our love before we can love him. Not so with God.

Romans 5:7-8 NASB

(7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

(8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were the enemies of God, He loved us. If we have His love in us, we can do as He says and "love our enemies". This is far beyond that which is natural to us. Imagine then this type of love expressed to those who are brothers and sisters in the Lord.

¹⁶ John 14:12

¹⁷ Acts 4:32-35

¹⁸ John 13:35

Jesus said that those who obeyed His commandments are the ones who love Him.¹⁹ Obedience is an expression of love. When one looks at the level of obedience to the commandments of the Lord that is in the denominational churches, then it is obvious that the love described by Jesus is missing in the hearts of the people. If the Lord were truly loved by His people then love would be expressed in obedient actions.

Obedience has to be learned by all of us. We are not naturally obedient because of the nature that we all have received as an inheritance from Adam. It is in our nature to be disobedient to authority and the accompanying commandments. The Scriptures say in Hebrews 5:8 that Jesus, although a son, learned obedience by the things that He suffered. Jesus did not bring obedience with Him when He emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant²⁰. He had to learn obedience as a man.

Suffering is the pathway to obedience. To obey the commands of God requires that we die to ourselves. Our desires cross the desires of God. We don't want to do the things that God requires of us. Paul speaks of this as the struggle between our old nature and our new nature when he says:

Romans 7:15 NASB

(15) For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate.

Romans 7:18-19 NASB

(18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.

(19) For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

This is a major internal struggle for the Christian. We know what we should do; what we want to do; but many times we still do the wrong thing even though we wanted to do the right thing. We suffer when we deny our self in obedience to the Lord. Jesus said,

Matthew 16:24 NASB

(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

We deny our self before we take up the cross to follow Him. Denying ourselves deals with the old nature—putting it aside and living from the new nature. Then, we take up the cross to follow Jesus. When Jesus took up His cross, He was going to a place of death. It is the same with us. When we take up our cross, it is because we are to die on it!

Galatians 2:20 NASB

(20) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

¹⁹John 14:15

²⁰Philippians 2:6-8

We are identified with Christ in His crucifixion and it becomes necessary that we also experience this in practice because we have a new source of life within us.

This is the narrow way that leads to life. This is the suffering that produces obedience as we die to our desires and live for His.

The people of God (at least the American version) have not embraced suffering. We are a church that has taken its leisure; that desires comfort above all else. We don't want to do anything that might cost us. We protect our lifestyle with all that we have and hope that nothing rocks the boat. As a consequence there is a shortage of love expressed toward the brethren. For love expressed is not in words only but also in actions.

God speaks plainly about this wrongly contented lifestyle in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 48:11-12 NASB

(11) "Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been undisturbed, *like wine* on its dregs, And he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, And his aroma has not changed.

(12) "Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will send to him those who tip *vessels*, and they will tip him over, and they will empty his vessels and shatter his jars.

Moab had settled on its "dregs" and has been at ease and has not been poured from vessel to vessel. "Dregs" are the settlement that occurs when making wine. The process involves pouring wine from one container to another, letting it settle, and then pouring it into another container. Each time that it is poured into another vessel, "dregs" are left behind and the wine becomes purer and purer. Of course if this doesn't happen, the wine is undrinkable, full of debris and fermented odors.

God told Moab that he would send the tipper of vessels to them because they had settled on their dregs. Since the Lord is no respecter of persons, we can expect Him to do something similar for us. The denominational churches are in a place where God may begin to upset the apple cart! He wants a pure, obedient people.

When the people of God neglect love for one another and for the Lord, the result is a lack of resources needed for the ministry. Resource shortage causes an unhealthy emphasis on money within the ministries of the church. It seems that all of the televangelists are continually pleading for funds both on air and in the mail. The denominational churches, large and small, all seem to be struggling financially. Everywhere we turn there are pleas to help the homeless, feed a child, or give to spread the Gospel. Why do the churches seem to be in such financial straits? Didn't God promise to supply all of our needs according to His riches in Glory?

I believe that God is saying something to His Church and we are being a little dull of hearing. Although God owns it all (the gold, silver, cattle on a 1000 hills), He doesn't seem to be releasing it to the Church. Why? The book of James tells us.

James 4:3 NASB

(3) You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Finances for the denominational churches are not used according to God's instructions. They are used to build edifices, finance programs, and pay for some leader's grandiose dreams that build his ego and feed his ambition without concern for God's desire for the Kingdom of God.

One of the areas of the greatest misuse of finances is the constant emphasis on the tithe and tithing. It is the Old Testament Law that structures the tithe. However, we are constantly reminded that Abraham tithed before the Law making tithing transcend the Law in its application to our lives. However, circumcision was also before the Law and the New Testament makes it clear that circumcision is not a requirement for us. Jesus took the structured rules of the Law and interpreted them for us spiritually. He did this in chapter five of Matthew where he restated the Ten Commandments from a new spiritual perspective.

Under the old covenant, the instructions for the tithe were very specific.

Numbers 18:26-32 NASB

(26) "Moreover, you shall speak to the Levites and say to them, 'When you take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe.

(27) 'Your offering shall be reckoned to you as the grain from the threshing floor or the full produce from the wine vat.

(28) 'So you shall also present an offering to the LORD from your tithes, which you receive from the sons of Israel; and from it you shall give the LORD'S offering to Aaron the priest.

(29) 'Out of all your gifts you shall present every offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the sacred part from them.'

(30) "You shall say to them, 'When you have offered from it the best of it, then *the rest* shall be reckoned to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine vat.

(31) 'You may eat it anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the tent of meeting.

(32) 'You will bear no sin by reason of it when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not profane the sacred gifts of the sons of Israel, or you will die.'"

The tithe was God's way of financing the priesthood. It was to provide to the Levites the things they needed just as if they were plowing and planting their own land. In the same manner, a tithe of the tithe went to the High Priest for his provision.

The tithe was not money but produce from the herds and fields. They were to eat it as their provision for service to the Lord.

There came a time when the people practically quit tithing and the priests had to rent land and raise crops to eat. It also appears that the priests weren't handling the tithes properly either.

Malachi 3:8-10 NASB

(8) "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.

(9) "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*

(10) "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

We hear these verses read just about any time an offering is taken. But, do they apply to us? The tithe needed to be brought into the storehouse in order to feed the priests. The storehouse was part of the Temple complex of buildings. That storehouse no longer exists. It was destroyed along with the Temple in 70 AD. The New Testament makes no mention of any type of storehouse for tithes nor does it mention tithing as something to be done. (For more information about tithing see [The Principle of the Tithe.](#))

Even under the Old Testament tithe functions, there is no record in the Scriptures for the tithe to go anywhere except into flesh and blood. Its purpose was to support those who labored in the Lord's work. The tithe was never used in any way to build anything. Even the Temple was built only with offerings above and beyond the tithe.

Today, we are actually still robbing God. The Institutional Church puts the tithing obligation on its people and then uses the so-called tithe to build new buildings, buy property, pay for janitorial services, install electronic equipment, and many other things needed by the modern denominational church. The Lord's priority is *people not things*. He expects any offering given to Him to be used for people. God said that those who rob him are cursed with a curse. No wonder there is a shortage of financial resources! We are consuming it on our own lusts just as James said.

I have nothing against buildings, per se, as long as they are not built and supported with contributions designated for the Lord's work. We need to understand the meaning of the Kingdom of God and realize that God's work involves Kingdom workers. We need to understand and follow God's financial principles and instructions, especially during the end times.

To care for our own is the expression of the love of God that testifies to the world that we are His. This requires us to fully express the love of God with each other. It is our love for one another that is the mark of discipleship (John 13: 34-35). Others will know that we follow the Lord Jesus by the way that we love each other. This means that our love must have outward, visible evidence that can be seen even by the unbeliever. The Apostle John made it clear in his first epistle:

1 John 3:17-18 NASB

(17) But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

(18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

John is saying that we shouldn't only give lip service to our love but that we should perform our love in actions. We are to do "love deeds" for each other. (This should be a natural expression of the life of the Lord that is within us.) When one has a need and we know it then we should supply that need. If we don't then there is a question whether or not the love of God dwells in our heart.

James also spoke clearly and pointedly about caring for our brothers and sisters:

James 2:15-16 NASB

(15) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food,

(16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

James is saying that words alone do not provide any benefit--there must be action with the words. We are to actively help our brothers and sisters that have need of food and clothing.

John the Baptist spoke in the same manner. When the people asked what they should do after one of his messages, he answered with the need for "love deeds".

Luke 3:10-11 NASB

(10) And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

(11) And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

The very nature of God is love as the scripture says²¹. God expressed that love in Jesus in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us²². Probably the most quoted verse of the Bible is John 3:16 yet we forget that the motivation of that scripture is that God so loved ... that He gave... Love is expressed in giving. God expressed His love for us by giving us His Son. If the love of God is in us then we too will express it by giving. We give of ourselves and our resources for each other. That is love in action and is evidence to the world that we are children of God and disciples of Jesus.

1 John 3:11 NASB

(11) For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

1 John 3:14 NASB

(14) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

1 John 3:16 NASB

²¹ 1John 4:8

²² Romans 5:8

(16) We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:23 NASB

(23) This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

1 John 4:7-11 NASB

(7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

(8) The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

(9) By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.

(10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

(11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 5:3 NASB

(3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Many times lip service is given to the concept of caring for one another while with our actions we focus on something else such as the Power of the Spirit. We all like to see God reveal His awesome power. It is exciting. And because we don't see enough of it, we think that all we need for a New Testament Church is the power of God; forgetting that we need New Testament people also. Too often power is emphasized in our teaching while character is neglected. Love comes out of character not power. Paul said that though I have all power and have not love I am an empty noise²³. As a matter of fact he said that faith itself works by love²⁴. It's not by power but by love that we are known as the disciples of Jesus. Without Love, we have missed one of the key elements of the New Covenant.

We have allowed ministry to focus on power to the point that there are many "flaky" things being done in the Name of the Lord. People run to this ministry to see what is going on and then run to another ministry to see it and on and on. They reach a point where there is no commitment to a specific assembly but are merely flitting about looking for "a touch" from the Spirit. No wonder there is a lack of care in the Body.

We must learn to "do the covenant", that is, perform the requirements of the covenant! The New Testament Covenant is to love God and each other. Even the Old Testament law hinged on this precept:

Mark 12:28-31 NASB

²³ 1Corinthians 13:1-3

²⁴ Galatians 5:6

(28) One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

(29) Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD';

(30) AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'

(31) "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

As we have seen from the Scriptures the "mark" or evidence that we partake of the new covenant is love. Under the old covenant the "mark" or evidence that you partook of the covenant was circumcision. Without circumcision you were still a heathen. It is imperative that we "do the covenant"; that we receive the "mark" in ourselves.

In Exodus chapter four we have a clear example of the necessity of "doing the covenant". This chapter details Moses leaving the wilderness to return to Egypt with his family to execute the directions that God had given him regarding Pharaoh. God had already met with Moses at the burning bush and told him all the things that he must do. God confirmed these with miracles; certainly the power of God was with Moses. Then Moses set out in obedience to do the things that God had said. Then a strange thing happened: "*Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.*" (Exodus 4:24) Moses and his family stopped for the night to rest at what, today, would be a hotel. While there the Lord sought to kill him! Isn't this strange. The Lord had just called him to a mighty work, empowered him for that work, and Moses was obediently proceeding to perform the work. Yet, when they stopped for lodging the Lord sought to kill him! Why?

Look at the next couple of verses:

Exodus 4:25-26 NASB

(25) Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me."

(26) So He let him alone. At that time she said, "*You are* a bridegroom of blood"--because of the circumcision.

Moses had not circumcised his son. Moses did not "do the covenant" with his family. The "mark" or evidence was missing. Obviously Moses and his wife had discussed this in the past because she knew exactly what to do when the crises came. However, as the head of the household it was Moses' responsibility to see that the covenant of God was performed within his family. Instead, he had yielded to Zipporah's wishes and had not done it.

So, in spite of the fact that God had called and empowered Moses, the Lord would not let him fulfill his calling until he had "done the covenant" in his own family. Once the son was circumcised, the Lord let Moses proceed.

Today, there are many groups that have been called and empowered of God to do special works for the Lord. Many have taken their visions and proclaimed them as a prophetic mandate. They have held these mandates up as a rallying banner saying, "God has called us. He is doing a new thing. Join us and get in on the new move of God." They have then proceeded full speed in obedience to do what God has called them to do. Very quickly many have hit walls of problems. Sometimes these have been financial; sometimes its been dissension in the ranks; sometimes its been leadership pressure; sometimes the reasons are unknown--things just bogged down. Of course, when this happens much energy goes into rebuking the Devil and taking authority over the circumstances and in some cases this is what is needed. However, we need to remember that is was *the Lord* that sought to kill Moses.

God is not going to allow any group to move into large-scale ministry until they learn to "do the covenant". Many groups like this have the Power of the Spirit and do many mighty works in the Name of the Lord and yet don't have love--the mark of the New Covenant. They have not had their heart circumcised. The very sign that we are the disciples of Jesus that is to be a testimony to the world is missing.

Circumcision of the heart is a suffering process that yields obedience and causes the love of God to be shed abroad. We need to embrace this process. It is necessary for our growth in the Lord and it is necessary if we are to be New Testament People.

A Shunammite woman in 2nd Kings gives the best testimony of what it should be like among the people of God.

2 Kings 4:8-13 NASB

(8) Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food.

(9) She said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually.

(10) "Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, *that* he can turn in there."

(11) One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested.

(12) Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite." And when he had called her, she stood before him.

(13) He said to him, "Say now to her, 'Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?'" And she answered, "I live among my own people."

Elisha periodically passed the Shunammite woman's house when he traveled. When she saw him the first time, she invited him to eat. After that, he stopped to eat whenever he passed. Then, the woman talked her husband into building a small guest room on the side of the house so that Elisha would have a place to stay when he passed by. She did this to honor him as a Man of God. When Elisha rested in the guest room after it was finished, he decided to do something for the

Shunammite woman and sent his servant to bring her to him. He asked her what he could do for her. If she wanted, he would speak to the King on her behalf or maybe to the Captain of the armies.

Her answer should pierce our hearts. She said, "I dwell among my own people." In other words, she said she didn't need anything from Elisha because she was living amongst her people. All of her needs were already taken care of because she was part of a community that cared for one another.

We, as the children of God, should be able to say to anyone who asks us what we want that we have no need because "we dwell among our own people." The world needs to see us as part of a community that cares for one another. It should be recognizable that we dwell among our own people.

NEW TESTAMENT GOVERNMENT

One sorely needed area of restoration is government. We can't have a New Testament Church without New Testament government. The scriptures say that Christ is the Head of the Church, King of the Kingdom, Ruler over everything and of the increase of His Government, there shall be no end²⁵. He has also given gifts to men for the perfecting (maturing) of the saints²⁶. These gifts are *men*; men who fulfill *functions* for the Church Universal and the Kingdom of God and constitute God's delegated government. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (shepherds, Greek = poimen) and teachers.

The Lord has established His own government (the Kingdom of God) with Himself as the Head or King of it. This means that He has designed and implemented all that is necessary for the proper functioning of His government and delegated His authority for its operation.

We assume that we have a pretty good idea of what a new testament Church is. Many times we use words that are familiar to us, words that are found in the New Testament, when in actual fact, we are not using them in the way the New testament uses them. We are not applying them to the same things to which the new testament applies them. Our words sound like New Testament truth, however, the meaning of the words is not the same. We have to look past tradition in order to see Truth.

The Church is not natural but divine. It is being built by Jesus, Himself, as He said to Peter.

Matthew 16:17-18 NASB

(17) And Jesus said to him, "**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

(18) "**I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

Jesus is the one building the church. He even calls it ***His*** church. It is not being built by man, nor upon the precepts of men but only according to the plan and purpose of God.

²⁵ Isaiah 9:7

²⁶ Ephesians 4:8-12

We should clear up some erroneous teaching that comes from this scripture. Some have believed and taught that Jesus was telling Peter that the church would be built upon him (i.e., Peter). That is not the meaning of this scripture at all.

In the original language, Jesus was making a pun. There are two Greek words for rock: *Petros*—small rock or pebble and *Petras*—large rock or boulder. Peter's name comes from *Petros* and means small rock. Jesus was actually contrasting Peter (*Petros*, pebble) with Himself (*Petras*, boulder). If we can imagine hand gestures as part of the conversation, it becomes very clear. Jesus points to Peter and says, "Peter, you're a small rock, but (Jesus turns his finger toward Himself) upon this mighty boulder I will build my church." Contrary to the opinion of some, Jesus was actually telling Peter that he was not a big enough rock for the church to be built upon but that it would require a rock like Himself for it to stand.

Since Jesus is doing the building, He also establishes His own government according to the plan of the Father. The government of the Church begins with the Lordship of Jesus. He is Lord of all creation and the Head of the Church. The head gives identity and control to the body. The head instigates and regulates all functions of the body. Without the head the body is dead.

When Jesus ascended He gave gifts to men:

Ephesians 4:8 NASB

(8) Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

Ephesians 4:11 NASB

(11) And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

These are gifts of men to the Church universal. In another place the scriptures say that He "appointed" some in the church:

1 Corinthians 12:28 NASB

(28) And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.

God has set an order of importance (of function not value) in the Church, which puts the apostles, prophets, and teachers at the head of the list.

The meaning of "appointed": Strong's #G5087, *tithēmi*; *to place, lay, set*: it is translated in the NASB as "appointed (6), assign (2), committed (1), conceived (1), destined (1), down *(4), falling (1), fixed (1), kept (1), kneeling *(2), knelt *(3), laid (22), laid aside (1), laid down (1), lay (4), lay...down (2), lay down (8), laying (2), lays down (1), made (4), make (4), offer (1), placed (4), present (1), purposed (1), put (15), puts (2), puts...away (1), putting (1), reached (1), serves (1), set...down (1), set down (1), sink (1)".

This word is translated 22 times as "laid". When read this way "God has laid in the church..." it gives us a different understanding than we may have previously entertained. Laid is a construction term. This fits with the idea of the apostles and prophets as part of the foundation.

When a “church” is built, the order of ministry that is required to be laid in the “church” is first the apostles, second, the prophets, thirdly, the teachers, then miracles, etc. The Lord has His own plan concerning the structure and function of His Body. We either comply with the Architect’s plans and schematics or we build a different structure than what was intended.

We are told in Hebrews²⁷ that when Moses was given the instructions to build the Tabernacle that it was a shadow of something in the heavenlies. If Moses had changed any of the instructions, he would have built a perverted tabernacle that no longer reflected the heavenly original.

We are also told that under the New Covenant, we are the temple of the living God. We, too, in our corporate expression are a reflection or shadow of something in the heavenlies. Why should we have the right to change the Lord’s building plans? He has already told us how to build: He is the foundation²⁸ and the chief cornerstone, the apostles and prophets complete the foundation²⁹ and we are living stones fitted together³⁰. We do not determine how the completed temple will look! That is the exclusive realm of our Lord.

God has established His authority structure and it is nothing like that of the world. As a matter of fact, Jesus forbade the worldly type of authority structure among His people

Matthew 20:25-27 NASB

(25) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them.

(26) "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

(27) and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

Yet, in the denominational churches, the authority structure that exists is one of “lording it over”. The denominational church is structured no differently than any other corporation in America. The Pastor is the CEO (usually) operating under the watchful eye of a Board of Directors (could be Deacons, Elders, or others). His goal is to increase the bottom line. In church parlance, this means increasing attendance and donations. Long term goals include bigger buildings and flashier programs. If these things don't happen the CEO (Pastor) is ousted and someone else is brought in which the Board believes can deliver the goods. This is exactly the scenario that Jesus said was not to be among us. How can we ever function as the Body of Christ when we try to do it according to the pattern of the World System?

The Lord has established a wonderful, functional methodology for the Church. It in no way resembles the world system hierarchy but is new and different. One of the beautiful ways that the Lord has structured His Church is the fact that it is impossible to do it the Lord's way in the flesh. It can only be done by walking in the Spirit with full recognition of the Lord as the Head.

Jesus is the sovereign Lord. He does not share His Headship with us. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a man who is head of a Church. The Lord does not allow that. He has

²⁷ Hebrews 8:5

²⁸ 1Corinthians 3:11

²⁹ Ephesians 2:20

³⁰ 1 Peter 2:5

established a plurality of leadership as a protection for the people and to insure that the Spirit and not a person drives decisions. We need to re-think our understanding of Church to allow the Spirit to modify our concepts of what the Church is and how it functions.

Leadership

New Testament Government requires God-called and God-established leadership. There are leadership issues that have been neglected in the Church for centuries. Who should be leaders? How do leaders come forth within the body? How do you train leaders? How do leaders function? This whole theme of truth is so desperately needed; but few seem to want to study it because of also having to study the whole arena of authority. And authority in our society is almost a dirty word. Nobody wants to face up to the issues of authority -- who has it and who doesn't; what is the correct use; and what constitutes abuse? Nobody wants to deal with it. But, you have to if you are going to come into New Testament relationship with leadership.

Human Leadership in the Local Church

DENOMINATIONAL STRUCTURE

In the King James New Testament the word "pastor" is only used once and that is in Ephesians 4:11. In King James' day, this word meant "shepherd" which is the correct translation of the Greek word that is used in the original. However, we have latched onto the word "pastor" and built it into something different than the Scriptures intended. Adapting the world's authority structure, we have installed the pastor as the head of the local Church. (Remember, Jesus does not share headship). Again, following the world's methods, we place requirements on a pastor such as seminary or other educational degrees without concern about his call and anointing. We have created an atmosphere where a person can become a professional pastor by following the world's methods for a career without the person even being born again by the Spirit!

This has resulted in a professional clergy and a non-professional laity with the laity expecting all of the work to be done by the clergy. Instead of going into the world, we try to bring the world to Church where the pastor can preach or minister to them.

Since the world doesn't typically want to attend Church, it becomes necessary to create bigger, better, flashier programs to attract the world. Of course, it also means that like any other retail business, location becomes of supreme importance. As many people as possible must see the Church building. Naturally, size then becomes a consideration. It is necessary to keep building bigger and bigger buildings in order to maintain the programs and attract as many people as possible.

This is opposite of Jesus' instructions. He said that the field is the world. We are to go into the world and make disciples. The field is the workplace not the Church. The Church is for believers. It is a place of rest and refreshing in the Spirit, a place where the Family gathers.

BIBLICAL STRUCTURE

There are two main forms of leadership--elders (presbyters) which are local leaders and are responsible for the local Church and apostolic teams which are trans-local Kingdom workers which are responsible for the Work of the outside of the local area.

Presbyters (elders) is a collective noun which means a group of presbyters (elders) and is the transliteration of the Greek word "presbuteros", which means elder. The functioning and government of elders has been familiar to God's people all the way back through the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, anywhere in the world where you find primitive social groups, you will find a varying concept of eldership being understood. Basically, that is the way they are governed -- by elders. They may not apply it properly, by our understanding, but at least they have an understanding of what an elder is which is more than can be said of some of us.

The scripture seems to imply that elders are God's permanent form of government. The concept of elders starts in Genesis and goes all the way through Revelation. We read about the elders in Heaven who are worshipping God night and day. We have to think of this concept of elders as something that God has established as His permanent form of government.

When God designs something, it is perfect. God gave Noah specific instructions on the building of the Ark and, if followed, would create a vessel capable of all that was intended of it. If Noah had had "a better idea" on any part of the construction, then the Ark would not have functioned as intended. It was the same with Moses and the Tabernacle. God gave specific design instructions and we are told that it was a shadow of something in the Heavens. So it is with God's government which also has its counterpart in the Heavens. It is not up to us to "have a better idea" or change the form and purpose of the governmental functions.

While there is only one Head, all other leadership is plural. Everywhere that elder is used in the New Testament, it is plural. This is God's safety feature for His people (Prov. 11:14; 24:6). Because not one person has the right to force his decision on the people. Plurality causes the elders to seek God for unity of decision. This gives the Lord the practical, functional headship that the scriptures present. Until agreement is reached through the Spirit, no decision is forthcoming.

Elders are shepherds who oversee the flock. They bear the greatest responsibility for the local brethren and are, therefore, the highest authority in a local Church. There is no one "over" the Elders except the Lord.

The second type of leadership mentioned is that of mobile apostolic teams. Until recently, the concept of Apostles has not received much study, thought, or discussion in the Church. Twenty years ago nobody talked about elders, but then God began to open our understanding and people began to seek out the truth about elders.

The Holy Spirit is beginning to focus on apostles and apostolic teams in order to bring about the same desire for truth, the same seeking after understanding. And the holy spirit is beginning to open our understanding to apostles and apostolic teams. The greatest major deficiency of God's people in this area is a failure to appreciate what apostolic teams are intended to be. In the evolution of the church, the apostolic teams were first and the elders were second. it is very

important that we understand this. It is one of those things that tradition has been calling one thing while it is really something else.

Characteristics of Both Types of Leadership

The Denomination leadership has the same characteristics as that of the world system. It is a hierarchy where each position is a stepping stone to the next. Little regard is given to call and anointing. Business success or education become the determining factors. As long as the Church operates like a business corporation it will be hindered in its ability to function according to the desires and wishes of the Lord.

To look at biblical leadership, let's look first at the local presbyters. Local means they are resident, that is, they live in a locality. Secondly, let's look at mobile apostolic teams. Mobile means they are not local but move from place to place. Characteristically each is normally plural. Presbyters is invariably plural. This is demanded by the fact that it is a collective noun.

You would have to search a long way in the new testament to find an apostle functioning on his own. The apostles usually moved in teams and sometimes they were much larger teams than sometimes we realize. They were not lone rangers. Each team was sovereign in its own sphere of work but not independent.

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

Isaiah says our ways are not God's ways³¹. We can't substitute our ways when God expects us to use His ways. We must learn God's ways and conform to them if we want to walk in the fullness of what the Lord has for us. Perhaps nowhere is this truth more apparent today than in Christian leadership.

When we accept the world's methods of leadership, we make the word of God ineffectual. Jesus said in Matthew 15:6, "...**And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.**" He was speaking of the application of the commandments to our lives and how some would try to circumvent the requirements by using man made traditions.

Seven characteristics of biblical leadership:

1. recruited by God not man;
2. selected more on potential than on achievement;
3. endorsed by other leadership;
4. submitted to other leadership;
5. exalts the Lord and not the leader;
6. masculine not feminine;
7. recognized and submitted to not imposed.

³¹Isaiah 55:6-9

Biblical leadership is recruited by God not man.

The priests in Israel were so numerous in Jesus' day that they had to wait their turn for temple duty yet not one of them was numbered among the Lord's disciples. None of the 12 apostles volunteered for the job. Everyone was conscripted³² by God.

Today, we attempt to get the Lord's work done by recruiting talent and leadership from secular ranks assuming natural talents are indispensable for the efficient management of the Church. We assume that corporate executives make the best board chairmen and that certified public accounts make the best church treasurers. This assumption is based on man's thinking and not on God's.

Many times the pressure of need prompts choices that later may prove unwise. This is shown in the New Testament by the disciples in their urgency to fill the vacancy in their rank after the death of Judas Iscariot. They selected two additional followers of Jesus, Joseph Justice and Mathias. They cast lots between them and chose Mathias and Acts 1:26 says he was numbered among the 12 apostles. However, we never hear of Mathias again and shortly after this the Lord himself recruits a young man named Saul, who later became Paul. Although Paul steadfastly refused to put himself at a level with the original 12 (see I Cor. 15:9) Paul more than filled the gaps in the apostolic ranks. In II Cor. 10:18 Paul is reminding us that while youthful zeal, talent, and self confidence looks good in man's eyes, they are not necessarily God's prerequisites for leadership.

What is man's part in the selection of leadership then? God chooses leadership, man recognizes it and confirms that leadership by the act of ordination. Paul and Silas followed this procedure in Acts 14:23 where they ordained elders in every church and they committed them to the Lord. But this is not an arbitrary choice on their part but they were confirming the leadership the Lord had already given. Paul makes this plain in his farewell to the Ephesian elders in Act 20:28 where he talks about the overseers which God has made for the Flock.

Biblical leadership is selected more on potential than on achievement.

The principle of growth fills the entire New Testament. Jesus said that the growth in the Kingdom of God is like growth in nature: first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn on the ear (Mark 4:28.) God's choice of leadership is not determined by a maturity already achieved but by potential. The Lord knows our hearts and He sees the end from the beginning. He already knows the outcome.

In fact, God often calls men whom the world considers unqualified and proceeds to pour some of His most powerful ministries through them. Their ministries are not based on their abilities, but on the Lord's. It is important for those chosen for leadership to know that the choice was not made on the basis of their own talents. The minister will grow into the fulfillment of his ministry provided he remains humble and faithful. In I Cor. 2:3-5 Paul himself follows this pattern. He completely discounts all of his own brilliance and intellectual ability and gives all of the glory to God.

Biblical leadership is endorsed by other leadership.

The study of the New testament church clearly indicates it's leaders practiced the principle of endorsement. In Acts 15 the dispute, between Paul and Barnabas and the Judaizers concerning the question of the gentile Christians keeping the law, is referred to a council of apostles and elders in

³² John 15:16

Jerusalem. From the letter sent announcing the decision of that council it is clear that the Judaizers were acting without endorsement (Acts 15:24.) Endorsement is the recognition of responsible leadership by other responsible leadership. Paul was not hesitant to both recommend responsible ministers and denounce false ones. See Phil 2:19,20,24-25 II Tim 1:15 2:16-18.

Biblical leadership is submitted to other leadership.

Even more crucial than the need for ministers to be endorsed is the need for them to be submitted to other leadership. Every man raised up in leadership has the responsibility of recognizing and submitting to those that God has placed over him (I Thes 5: 12-13.) Without the principle of endorsement, the principle of submission is not yet fully accepted by many of the ministers of the body of Christ. We must admit that there are unsubmitted, even rebellious, ministries which are blessing God's people. The blessings are God's gracious response to the needs of His people. They do not necessarily indicate his approval of the minister. God blesses many things he does not fully approve. We live in a day in which divine blessings are falling like abundant rain from heaven and God sends his rain on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45.) Sometimes his blessings are given, not because we are all obedient, but to lead us into obedience. God does not bless rebellion but he often blesses in spite of rebellion.

To avoid being in rebellion, every ministry in the body of Christ should be in mutual submission to other ministries and every minister should be able to identify those God has placed in relationship with him and to whom there should be mutual submission. To say "I serve God only and no man can tell me what to do" is not only rebellion but it is sheer stupidity. As one wise minister said "If you are too big to be led then you are too little to lead."

Biblical leadership exalts the Lord and not the leader.

Leaders of the church occupy positions of unique privilege and peril. These are days of multiplied miracles. Often the praise and thanksgiving meant for God falls on the Minister. God himself has a bountiful supply of situations tailor made to help keep us humble. I can say this with the confidence that is born of painful experience. Paul reminds us in II Cor 4:7 that we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Christians have developed a warped view of what constitutes mature Christian leadership. The more mature a Christian is the more natural he is. He shares the truth God has entrusted to him in a way which accurately reflects his own personality. He does not project a false piousness or a fake holiness that separates him from people. He gets credit for his ministry to God but the glory is put on the Lord where it belongs. He does this without false humility. He is secure but not complacent in the task of performing his ministry. He has also learned not take himself too seriously.

Biblical leadership is masculine not feminine.

In the New Testament, leadership, authority, and government are distinctly male responsibilities. This is not in any way a designation of superior or inferior roles, it is a revelation of divine purpose. Both Paul and Peter make it plain that Christian men and women are of equal value in the Kingdom of God, however, equal worth does not imply equal function (Gal 3:28; I Pet 3:7). It is on the basis of divine distinction of function that Paul said in I Tim 2:12-14 that he suffered not a woman to teach or usurp authority over a man. For women to be excluded from positions of leadership and

authority is not a matter of divine discrimination but it is a matter of divine protection. A woman's role according to scripture, is a highly favored, blessed and protected position.

In chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians, Paul explains about covering and its importance: "Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels." The translators have added "a symbol of" to try to help understanding; it is not in the original language. So, it says "the woman ought to have authority on her head". The word that is translated as "authority" also means "jurisdiction", which is a governmental term. Paul is saying that it is necessary that a woman have "authority on her head", i.e., be "under authority". He explains the covering or authority structure: God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. This has nothing to do with value or worth. It has everything to do with protection and safety and is God's ordained governmental pattern.

Paul said that it is necessary for the woman to be under authority because of the angels. What did he mean by that statement? To which angels is he referring? Obviously, women would have nothing to fear from God's angels so he must mean the fallen angels, i.e., those serving Satan. Why should women be more concerned about the fallen angels than men?

There may be multiple answers to that question. One has to do with deception and goes all of the way back to Genesis. Eve was deceived by the serpent not Adam. In most cases, women are more spiritually sensitive than men. Because of this, women are more open to deceptive and seducing spirits.

Another reason for covering for the woman is presented in Genesis chapter 6:

Genesis 6:1-2 NASB

- (1) Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,
- (2) that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

These verses have caused a lot of controversy because people have a problem believing what they say and want to apply an interpretation that traditionally fits their doctrine but does violence to the plain meaning of the scriptures. In the Old Testament "sons of God" always refer to angels and never men except for Adam³³. Men are called sons of Adam and not sons of God.

The "sons of God" (fallen angels) took wives from the daughters of men. The result of this union produced the giants (Hebrew=*nephilim*) which were hybrid beings with no part in the creation of God.³⁴ There is reason to believe that we might witness more of this just prior to the return of the Lord. It is not by accident that during this generation, the movie industry has produced a number of movies depicting illicit sexual unions between women and either the Devil or with demons

³³ To be a son of God requires a direct pro-creative act of God. Adam is called a son of God, Jesus is called the Son of God, and we are called sons of God (under the New Testament) because we have been "born again".

³⁴ The New American Standard Bible doesn't translate the word but leaves it as Nephilim. It is an interesting study to follow it through the Old Testament. The promised land was occupied by the Nephilim. Goliath was of the race of the Nephilim.

producing either the Antichrist or an incarnation of Satan. Could this be to prepare people for the possibility?

The enemy of our souls certainly hates the idea of the need for women to be "covered" i.e. "under the authority of their husbands". We see this in the results that the feminist movement has had on the mentality of women. To be a wife, mother, or homemaker is considered oppressive. The "liberated" women in the workforce pity a "stay at home" mom. This philosophy is directly promoted by Satan because it is the same that he espoused himself when he rebelled against God.

Lucifer was not satisfied with who he was, where he was, nor with what he was doing. He wanted to be like God, sit on the throne of God, and receive the worship of God³⁵. Because of his dissatisfaction he rebelled against God and as a result became Satan. He stirs the hearts of people today to be dissatisfied with who they are, what they are doing, and their position in life.

A husband submitted to the Lord and walking in the Spirit provides a covering for his wife that affords security and contentment. Each must find their place in God's structure and begin operating according to His instructions especially in the area of authority and leadership.

By New Testament standards it is obvious some women are in positions of spiritual leadership that would be better filled by men. But in many cases the men are to blame. They have abdicated their leadership responsibility. They have created vacancies in leadership that Christian women have moved in to occupy more out of desperation than desire. Leadership has fallen on the women's shoulders by simple default. Surely, God holds Christian men more responsible for the unhappy results than he holds the women.

While leadership is primarily a man's responsibility, under the proper covering and headship of their husbands, women can conduct powerful effective ministries.

Biblical female ministry includes:

- receive and minister spiritual gifts--Act 21:8,9
- Teach the younger women--Titus 2:3-5
- Minister hospitality to ministers Roman--16:1-2
- Share in an almost unlimited ministry under the covering and company of their husbands--Acts 18:1-3 18,26

It is a disaster waiting to happen when women seek leadership outside the confines of the God's stated function.

Biblical leadership is not imposed; it is recognized and submitted to.

The Bible speaks of leadership in two distinct ways. Recognizing it and exercising it. For Example, the scripture clearly states that the husband is to be recognized as the leader of his wife (I Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22.) Although the wife is told to recognize the leadership of her husband and submit to it, the husbands are told the proper way to exercise the leadership that has been recognized in them (Eph 5:25.) The leadership given the husband must not be used to force his wife to do his bidding. It is

³⁵ Isaiah 14:12-14

leadership to be demonstrated by loving sacrifice, which puts her well-being before his own, even as Christ loved and gave himself for the Church.

On the other hand, the wife must recognize her husband's leadership, irrespective of how inaccurately he exercises it. The authority vested in her husband is God's authority, and she is to submit to that authority not because he is the right kind of husband but simply because he is the husband God has placed over her. She needs to also recognize that submission is not necessarily obedience. She can have an attitude of submission even if she must disobey her husband because he is being disobedient to the Lord and His commands.

This double principle of recognizing and exercising leadership applies not just to the Christian home but to the whole body of Christ. Concerning recognizing leadership Paul says in I Thes 5:12-13 that we should know them that labor over us. The whole church must understand that recognition and submission to spiritual leadership is not based on the worthiness of the person that God has placed in leadership (there are no perfect leaders) but the fact that God has made him a leader. Leadership is recognized and submitted to because it is God given, not because it is properly administered. Concerning recognizing leadership Peter says I Pet 5:1-3 that the elders that are among you are to exhort and to feed the flock. As in the case of husbands, elders are to exercise their leadership in humble Christlike service, not imposing their authority but demonstrating it through servanthood.

It is one thing to see scriptural principles, quite another to apply them. There is a gap between revelation and realization. By the standards of these 7 principles many of us may find ourselves in unscriptural situations trying to fill unscriptural rolls. But rather than coming under condemnation, let us simply resolve to make the necessary adjustments.

ELDERS

The scriptures refer to the people of the Church of God in three categories. Two of these categories are leadership as shown by Phillipians 1:1.

Philippians 1:1 NASB

(1) Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

This Epistle is addressed to three groups of people:

- all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi
- overseers
- deacons

These three categories cover all of the people and one would expect that each person is in one of these categories. Notice that "Pastor" as used today does not appear in this verse. If such an office existed as we think of it today, then Paul was very improper in not addressing the Epistle to the Pastor, also.

The Greek word for "overseer" is "episkopos" and in the KJV is translated as "overseer" and sometimes as "bishop". This KJV rendering has created an artificial office of a "bishop" that

does not exist in the scriptures. Therefore, a bishop is really the same as a shepherd or overseer. In other words, a bishop is an elder.

In the New Testament there are three different Greek words used for these leaders:

- ◆ "Presbuteros" = Elder
- ◆ "Episkopos" = Overseer (sometimes in KJV "Bishop")
- ◆ "Poimen" = Shepherd (once in KJV "Pastor")

These three different words all denote one and the same function or ministry as shown by Acts 20:17, 28:

Acts 20:17 NASB

(17) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28 NASB

(28) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Paul called for the Elders at Ephesus to come to him so that he could see them and tell them some things before going to Jerusalem. (This would have been very improper if there had been a "Pastor" as we think of it by our tradition.) As he talks with the Ephesian Elders, he describes their purpose in verse 28: the Holy Ghost has made them overseers of the flock and they are to feed (Greek = shepherd) the flock. So, the Elders were to oversee and shepherd the people. (The Greek word for "feed" is the verb form of the noun "shepherd".) This same concept is also expressed by Peter in I Peter 5:1,2.

1 Peter 5:1-2 NASB

- (1) Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,
- (2) shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Peter was exhorting the elders to do the job that God had given them. He knew this job experientially because he was also an elder (Greek = "sumpresbuteros" = co-elder). The Elders were to shepherd the flock and take oversight. Peter is patterning this after Jesus (I Peter 2:25) as the Shepherd and Bishop (KJV), Guardian (NASB) (Greek = Overseer) of our souls.

How does one sum up the meaning of these words? The qualification as a leader is "Elder"; the ministry of the elder is to "shepherd"; and the work of a shepherd is to "oversee". It is a shame that the King James translation was inconsistent by using different words to mean the same thing.

Elders are the resident ministries within the local church and as such are restricted to a locality. That is, an elder is an elder in his local church, but not necessarily in another local church. The term "elder" is a relative term. In a group of eight year olds, a ten year old would be an elder. An Elders' maturity level is relative to the congregation in which he resides. That means an elder

in Corinth who moves to Rome would not necessarily be an elder in Rome unless the Holy Ghost appoints him.

Elders are always mentioned in the plural. The very word in Greek is a collective noun and means more than one. Scriptures in which elders (plural) is used:

- Acts 14:23 "...ordained (choose) them elders in every church..." (The same Greek word for "choose" is used in Acts 10:41 and 2 Cor. 8:19.)
- Acts 20:17 "...and called the elders of the church."
- Titus 1:5 "...ordain (set) elders in every city,..."
- James 5:14 "...call for the elders of the church..."
- See also: Phil 1:1, 1 Thess. 5:12, Heb. 13:7, 17, 24.

Appointment of Elders

Appointment of elders was one of the functions of apostles. In Acts 14:14, Barnabas and Paul are called apostles; in verse 23, they appointed elders in every church. If you search the New Testament, you will find that there is no record of elders being appointed by anyone except apostles. I'm not saying that under the diversity of God it couldn't happen some other way, only that its not recorded if it did.

In Titus 1:5, Paul is writing to Titus and giving him his assignment for Crete. Paul and Titus had been together in Crete and had started a work of God there. Paul had moved on and left Titus behind. He now writes to him: "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." (NIV)

Notice that things are left unfinished until elders are appointed. I believe from this that a church is not a church without elders. The transition from mere disciples ("...wherever two or three are gathered in My Name...") to a functioning church is the appointment of elders. Again, this was done by apostolic authority and responsibility since Titus was Paul's delegated representative in Crete.

We have another grouping of three divisions among God's people in Acts 15:23 "...the apostles and elders and brethren...". The apostles represent the mobile teams. The elders represent local leadership and the brethren represent everybody else.

Even though Peter was an apostle, when dealing with a local Church he considered himself as an elder as shown by I Peter 5:12 "...who am also an elder (Greek = co-elder)..." Where an apostle resides and is associated with a local church, within that church his position is that of a co-elder (compare 2 John 1; 3 John 1). An apostle in a local Church has no authority beyond that which any other elder would have. This would make the apostle subject to the elders of the local church for ministry within the Church.

Elders are the vital link between the mobile ministries and the resident personnel of a local church. The mobile ministries arise from the local Church and are then sent out to do the work that the Lord has called them to do. They report back to the local elders periodically so that the

Church can rejoice with them in the work. Normally, the mobile teams go out for ministry and then return and then go out again. That is the pattern presented in Acts.

Authority in the Church

While apostles display a broad range of authority, they are not "over" the elders. The elders are responsible to the Holy Spirit only in their oversight of the flock. The apostles can exhort, reason with, or otherwise recommend courses of action, but they cannot command the elders except in issues of doctrine. The apostles are the final authority regarding doctrine and doctrinal interpretation.

There is a clear order of authority given for a church meeting with the Elders given responsibility. Our traditions have dramatically distorted the Scriptures in this area. Various denominations have added their own thoughts to the authority structure of the church and mixed secular offices and principles with the Word of God.

Those that handle the Word and are responsible for its proclamation. God intends for His Word to have preeminence. These come first before the gift and power ministries. It is more important that the Word of God be proclaimed than it is for miracles to occur. If the Word is given its proper place then the signs and miracles will follow. It seems that many times, we confuse the order of things.

1 Timothy 3:1-2 NASB

- (1) It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.
- (2) An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

An Elder must be able to teach, that is, handle the Word of God appropriately and communicate it clearly.

Deacons

The only other function mentioned in connection with the local church is that of "deacon". Deacons did not come into existence at the beginning of the church but only later as the need arose. Deacons are therefore secondary to the functioning of the church and only come into existence as need arises.

Acts 6:1-5 NASB

- (1) Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.
- (2) So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.
- (3) "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

- (4) "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
(5) The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

The need for deacons arose when the number of disciples reached the point that the administration of the needs of the widows presented a problem. It appeared that the Hebrew widows had their needs cared for while the others were neglected. This was a potentially volatile situation that could cause great dissension in the Church.

At first, to the twelve, it appeared that the only way to resolve this was to distribute the daily ministrations themselves as they were the only ones that all of them could trust. However, the twelve said that it wasn't reasonable for them to leave the ministry of the word and prayer to wait on tables and that the people should select from among themselves trustworthy men to do that. They gave the people the criteria for selection and after they were chosen, the twelve confirmed them.

The Greek word for deacon is "diakoneo" and literally means "server of tables". It comes from a root word that means "to run errands". It is clear in cases where added responsibilities make it necessary, elders are assisted in matters of practical administration by deacons (servers). Deacons are chosen from amongst the local congregation by the believers themselves, but their appointment must be confirmed by the leaders of the local church.

The maximum total personnel of a local church is given by Phillipians 1:1 and consists of three groups: 1) elders 2) deacons 3) saints (all remaining believers). To add to these or to take away from these is to do serious harm to the Word of God. We must do it God's way or forever fall short of His purposes.

NEW TESTAMENT DISCIPLINE

There are two aspects to New Testament discipline. Corporate discipline is exercised by the leadership and deals with the purity of the Body of Christ. Personal discipline is personal and deals with the purity of the individual. Each of us need to exercise discipline in all of the areas of our life by putting off the things of the flesh and putting on the things of the Spirit. We live by an exchanged life—Jesus has taken ours and given us His.

CORPORATE DISCIPLINE

With authority comes the responsibility for its proper use. We have all heard about abuses of authority where the leader acts like a little tin dictator. This type of image causes us to shy away from the discussion of the proper application of true new testament authority even by those who have it. No one wants anyone thinking "who do they think they are" or to appear to be something that one is not. However, when authority comes from the Holy Spirit, we must accept the responsibility for its execution.

Moses gives us a good example of the difference between authority exercised in the flesh and in the Spirit. He was concerned for his people and their oppression. This was the stirring of his call

in the Lord. He saw an Egyptian abusing an Israelite and with the arm of the flesh and a stick killed the Egyptian. This, however, did not cause anyone to recognize God's calling or authority on Moses.

Exodus 2:13-14 NASB

(13) He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?"

(14) But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."

The answer to the question was that God had made Moses a prince and a judge over them. They just didn't recognize it. Forty years later, Moses returns in the power of the Spirit and with his stick. This time, when he raised it, he killed all of the Egyptian army including the king. That's the difference of a stick with an arm of flesh and a stick with the arm of the Lord. Authority is given to be used under the proper anointing and according to the purposes of God. Usually, it is used to prevent the Enemy from hindering the work of the Lord.

The New Testament gives us several examples of the proper use of authority. However, these have been largely ignored by the denominational church because the enforcement of authority would cause too many people to decide to go to a different denominational church where their rebellious spirit will not be challenged.

An extreme example of the correct use of authority actually resulted in the death of two believers. Today, this would be un-thinkable. How's that for radical? Chapter 5 of Acts tells the story.

Acts 5:1-10 NASB

(1) But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,

(2) and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

(3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"

(4) "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

(5) And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

(6) The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

(7) Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

- (8) And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."
- (9) Then Peter *said* to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out *as well*."
- (10) And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

The key to the situation was the hypocrisy of Ananias and his wife. This occurred during the time when many believers were selling possessions and giving so that no one would have need. They presented their gift as if it was the entire amount received when actually they had withheld a portion. Peter told them that they were not required to give either the possession or the money received for it. But, they wanted to look good to everybody else and therefore, gave part and acted as if it were all. Peter said this was lying to the Holy Spirit (even though they were talking to Peter) and judgment fell quickly on the hypocrites.

When authority is handled properly, enforcement is performed by the Holy Spirit. After this occurred, I suspect that there weren't many believers that would ever consider lying to Peter.

Lying is always tied to hypocrisy. The very meaning of hypocrite is "play acting". The denominational churches are filled with people who "play act" as believers without allowing the Holy Spirit to change their hearts. The solution to hypocrites in the church is the application, again, of apostolic authority.

Paul also exercised apostolic authority in a rather dramatic manner. He reprimanded the elders of the Church in Corinth because they had not exercised authority to remove the man who was committing incest and had apparently refused correction.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 NASB

- (1) It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.
- (2) You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.
- (3) For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.
- (4) In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,
- (5) *I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Paul instructs them to exercise authority and turn over the offender to the Devil for the destruction of the flesh. This is a proper use of authority when one who professes to be a believer refuses to forsake sinful behavior that is clearly presented in the Scriptures as

abominable. (Apparently, this resulted in a quick repentance from the man for in his next letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of forgiveness and restoration.)

Paul continues to give us very clear instructions for the use of authority in dealing with those who profess to believe but whose actions are not righteous.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 NASB

- (9) I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;
- (10) I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.
- (11) But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one.
- (12) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*?
- (13) But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

Paul is telling them that they have a responsibility to judge those who call themselves brothers. Those outside the church, God will judge; but, those within must be judged by the believers. In other words, believers should exhibit the fruit that comes from believing because they have turned (repented) from sin. The church was not to fellowship or keep company with such a one. The elders were to use their God given authority to put the wicked person out from among them.

Paul tells Timothy about delivering others to Satan as part of his responsibility.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 NASB

- (19) keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.
- (20) Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

The list of sins of which the wicked person is guilty is prevalent in the denominational churches today. The decline in spirituality is in part due to the fact that denominational pastors can't exercise God given authority to deal with these issues. Imagine the uproar in a congregation if any of today's pastors tried to be obedient to Paul's instructions.

PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

Discipline--the mark of maturity

Authority must first be learned within ourselves. We learn this through disciplining ourselves to conform to the Word of God and fulfilling His commandments.

The term discipline carries a variety of meanings. To the child, it means to be compelled to do something undesirable and being punished if he rebels. Discipline for him means compulsion, pain, and authority. To the soldier, discipline is conforming to regulations, instant obedience to orders, Kp duty, reveille on cold mornings. To the student, it means the course of instruction he is undertaking with a specific requirement in rules and examinations incident to it. To the Christian, discipline means discipleship: following Jesus with one's self denied and one's cross resolutely carried. The child, the soldier, the student, the disciple are all correct, but there is something more.

The aim of child discipline, or military, or academic, or religious is a disciplined character which goes beyond the minimum demands of the specific disciplines and permeates the whole life. Imposed discipline must lead to self discipline. It is even possible for the Christian to be a sincere and regenerated follower of Jesus yet remain undisciplined in his character and in many areas of life. Self-discipline is the ability to regulate conduct by principle and judgment rather than impulse, desire, pressure or social custom.

Disciplining the appetites

Discipline brings the ability to subordinate the body and its appetites to the mind. Paul said I keep my body under. The subordination of the physical includes not only the appetite for food but also the sex urge. In some this has been so pampered that it is abnormally excitable. To make matters worse, such persons have lived with the creed of "I can't help it" and similar expressions of moral flabbiness.

Too often the moral downfall of men is blamed on some failure of their wives. That is a cowardly evasion of moral responsibility. The man of disciplined character does not have to have a warm responsive wife to stay on the path of virtue. He keeps himself there by the grace of God. If his relationship with his wife is happy, he is grateful. If it is not, he simply appropriates more grace and demonstrates the type of man that he is. A weak man is a poor risk no matter how warm his wife. A strong man will keep himself pure, even if it means total abstinence the rest of his life. It must be emphatically affirmed that this is not just a matter of being made that way or natural temperament. It is a matter of achieving complete subordination.

Reason and emotions

Too often the mind serves only the purpose of devising excuses for doing what the heart wants to do. The heart must first be cleansed and kept on the leash of discipline. Then it can safely become a co-partner with the mind in living according to fixed principles.

Emotions include the affections. Friendship when based on mutual respect and understanding is a beautiful gift. But true friendship is always a matter of increasingly deepening affection.

When one suddenly awakens to a ripening affection that is either forbidden or dangerous, he has a real problem on his hands. For example, an unmarried Christian may develop a friendship with an unregenerate person at the office, or school, or some other perfectly natural and legitimate relationship. At first there is no thought of love. In fact, the Christian may even be motivated by an honest desire to help the other spiritually. But, if the two are thrown together more and more, gradually they fall in love. Then the Christian will have to face what will be a terrible emotional

struggle to become extricated from the relationship or, otherwise, a non-scriptural marriage will result.

And an even more dangerous peril can exist when the friendship is between married Christians and the opposite sex. Their work, even the Lord's work, may legitimately throw them into each other's company. In our society there are many such teams in our every day work environment. Duty often demands co-working with member of the opposite sex. Working with persons of the opposite sex may bring mutual distrust and dislike, there is not great peril in that. Working together may also bring respect, mutual confidence and comradeship. So far so good, such friendships may be holy and beautiful on a brother, sister basis.

However, a certain reserve and distance must be preserved at all costs and will be by men and women of disciplined character. Friendship can become affection, affection leads to love, love can produce lust. The progress of the friendship can be a shock to both. That which begun innocently can end disastrously. The rugged advice of Jesus to pluck out the offending eye or cut off the offending hand or foot is never more apropos than in this kind of situation. Souls, homes, happiness, influence all will be saved only by drastic, even ruthless action. The feelings must not be spared, no quarter given. Here again, Christians must not tolerate the least vestige of the philosophy of "I can't help it." Emotions may not immediately obey the will but actions must. In due course by the grace of God emotions will follow the lead of a disciplined, adjusted, strong or decisive stand.

The finest discipline of all is not that which struggles out of a tragic situation, but foresees and forestalls the situation in the first place. The Young Christian who adopts certain basic principles respecting friendships and avoids making intimate alliances with the unsaved will not have the battle with tumultuous desires and affections later on. And the married Christian worker who is ever alert to the perils that beset him has self-discipline always in mind. Words, looks and actions will not ignite fires that he will have to work feverishly to put out.

Priorities

A truly disciplined character has the ability to set priorities, i.e., to have knowledge of what needs to be done and the order in which to do them. We all know that focusing on things above is much better than focusing on earthly things. We know that character is far greater than pleasure. Usefulness is better than idleness. That righteousness is infinitely more satisfying than popularity. Confronted bluntly with these alternatives, then we know which ones to approve. The problem is not in knowledge. The problem is in actually giving first place to these values in practical daily living. That is a problem primarily of character. This involves the rejection, day by day, of that army of possible activities which clamor for our precious energy but which would hamper the doing of more important things.

Selection--selection--selection--that is the law of life. We cannot join everything so we must select. We cannot participate in every good cause therefore we must select. We cannot give to everything therefore we must select. We cannot go to every interesting concert or lecture or meeting, therefore, we must select. We cannot read everything; therefore, we must select.

Whatever one's goal may be, it can only be achieved by the sacrifice of the lesser goals. This requires discipline of a high order. If we give top priority to those pursuits that should have low priority, if we major in minors, if we show first rate dedication to a second rate cause, if we allow

friends and impulses and the convenience of the moment to dictate our priorities while we weakly drift with the daily circumstances, we will be shabby, mediocre, and ineffective persons.

The final area for a disciplined life is in the adjustment to authority. It is by no means easy to subordinate natural initiative and self-assertion to legitimate authority but it must be done if one expects maximum happiness and usefulness, if one desires to achieve a mature character. The unbroken colt is of little value. The value that he has is on the assumption that he will not remain unbroken. The person who finds his true place and worth is the person who wears the yoke. At the moment a young man or woman intelligently learns that life is a bundle of relationships that involve give and take, his or her value to society compounds many fold.

Proper submission to legitimate authority by no means extends to conformity to the world. Even that spirit of submission that Christian wives are to manifest toward unsaved husbands, which is the acid test of a wife's spiritual maturity is not to be interpreted as requiring obedience to demands which violate her conscience as a Christian. One can have a submissive spirit without being obedient in a given circumstance.

Discipline is the mark of maturity. Without discipline a person's character will remain weak and infantile.

For further study relating to the New Testament Church:

[Will the Real Church Please Stand Up?](#)

[The Captivity of the Church Series](#)

[Being the Church Series](#)