

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE LOCAL CHURCH¹

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INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to this study, we present a survey of the types of church government displayed in the major denominations and movements. We then note briefly some of the variations in the functional styles that operate, locally, within these types.

A. Denominational Governments & Their Relationship to the Local Church

Local Churches relate to other local churches and the Universal Church through one of the five types described below. In most instances, the type of church government displayed in a denomination reflects the social or historical setting that existed when that denomination was formed.

1. Roman Government

The Roman Catholic Church government is modeled after the government of the Roman Empire of the Caesars. Caesar had his Senate, even as the Pope has his Council of Cardinals. Caesar had governors over the districts of the Empire, even as there are bishops over geographical districts. There is a clear chain of command, all the way from the village authorities (parish priests in the church) to Rome. Absolute authority over each citizen (communicant) and governmental agent (clergy) belongs to the government (hierarchy).

2. Council of Bishops, Type I

The Type I Council of Bishops, with a Presiding Bishop, is a government in which the local clergyman is answerable to his bishop. Each geographical area has a bishop in authority. The bishops assert that they trace their ordination in an unbroken line back to the apostles. Thus, they function in apostolic authority and anointing. Only bishops can ordain clergy. The local clergyman has as much freedom to be innovative as his bishop allows him to have. Usually, the freedom is quite unrestricted.

The major expression of this form of government is the Anglican Church.

3. Council of Bishops, Type II

The Type II Council of Bishops, with a Presiding Bishop, is a government in which both the *local clergyman and the congregation* (through the parish council, church board, etc.) are answerable to the bishops. In this style of government, the titles, *Council of Bishops* or *Bishop* may not be used, but the functions are the same as those that use these titles.

The degree of accountability to the Council of Bishops varies from denomination to denomination. In some denominations, the council will be national. In some, it is restricted to a smaller geographical region. In some denominations, the congregation owns the church building; in some, it is owned by the denomination.

Broad examples of this general type of government are The Disciples of Christ, Methodist, Assembly of God, Presbyterian, and many Pentecostals. Apostolic succession is not a part of the ecclesiology of most governments of this type.

4. Association

This style of government is an association of churches with commonly held doctrinal standards and the denominational label as the two unifying elements. Each congregation is self-governing. The association has no authority to appoint or to remove clergy in the local church. The association exercises authority over the local church in two ways:

- peer pressure
- the threat of expulsion from the association.

The most obvious examples of this form of government are the various Baptist denominations.

5. Independent

The term, *Independent*, refers to the fact that these churches are not governed by any organization above the congregational level. *Independent* does not refer to the attitude that these churches have toward the Christian community at large.

Although these churches are self-governing and belong to no denomination it is not unusual for an independent church to be in a deep spiritual relationship with other independent churches. When such relationships do exist, they often are of a deeper quality than that which exists between the local churches of some denominations. On the other hand, some independent churches are very sectarian and some also are very “independent” in their attitude toward other churches.

Examples of independent churches are Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and many Charismatic Churches. Tulsa Christian Fellowship is an independent church.

B. Varieties of Functional Style in the Local Church

There are varieties of governmental styles at the local church level. Such variety exists within denominations as well as in independent churches. Some denominations determine both the structure and the functional style of the local church government. Others allow latitude in the functional styles. Independent churches are free to determine these things for themselves. Here are the five most common functional styles.

1. The Commander

This style of government is seen in the "one- man rule" pastoral style. The Commander is a functional style that can occur in local churches of all denominations, and especially in independent churches. In this style, the local pastor (although he may use some other title) is the boss. He knows what is best. He has goals. He marshals the church and expects it to follow him. Often, though not always, people are not as important as goals, or the institution, or the commander's need to succeed. In some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, the commander even owns the building

Sometimes the commander style of governmental function comes from the clergyman's perception of himself as being God's prophet in the sense of a Moses, a Joshua, or a David. At other times, this style is an expression of clerical insecurity. Some commanders came to Christ in a church that followed this model and they have perpetuated it because it is the only model that they have known.

2. The Guru

In this style, the minister (pastor) views himself as being called to a ministry (teaching, preaching), and the congregation exists as his platform. The church members are helpers, caring for various details, so that the guru's ministry can be fulfilled. To the degree that the guru chooses to be involved in the church government, his word is final. The degree of the guru's involvement will vary from situation to situation.

3. The Corporation

This is a very common governmental style in both evangelical and fundamentalist churches. The church is operated like an American Corporation, with a corporate board (although the board may call itself a council of elders, or a council of stewards, a parish council, etc.), and its management style. The clergyman usually (although not always) is the CEO of the corporation.

4. The Democracy

In a democracy the congregation governs by majority vote. There is a president (elder, minister, etc.) who executes the will of the congregation. Often, the democracy has a board that handles routine details of the church's business, but the board must answer to the congregation through reports, budgets, and congregational business meetings. The clergyman may or may not be on the board.

5. Presbyterian

In the presbyterian style (classical use of the term, not the Presbyterian Church), the congregation is governed by a council of elders (presbyters). The role of clergy in this functional style will vary from situation to situation. The elders are viewed as God's chosen overseers of the local church. The degree of accountability to the congregation will vary from one congregation to another. The elders may have many leaders serving under them (deacons, stewards, etc.), but the decision-making role belongs to the elders, unless they invite others to join them in specific decisions.

Churches that seek to be New Testament Churches do not look to any of these types or functional styles as models. Instead, they look to the pattern of the church as it existed in the apostolic age.² To accomplish this, it is necessary to discover that order in the New Testament. In this present study, we will survey the Book of Acts for historical data on church government. Then, we will turn to the epistles for apostolic comment on the subject.

Some have criticized the effort to structure a contemporary church according to the pattern in the New Testament. They state, "There are all kinds of church governments in the New Testament. In some instances we see one man rule; in others, a presbyterian style; in others, apostolic rule." Such statements fail to recognize that *Acts* is a historical record of the evolution of the early church. As we will demonstrate in this paper, the church evolved from an apostolic-led infancy to an elder-led maturity. In the epistles, the council of elders is the consistent pattern.

Confusion also has come from those who fail to note the difference between an apostolic team and a church. We have dealt with this subject in another study.³

SECTION ONE APOSTOLIC GOVERNMENT⁴

A. PRE-PENTECOSTAL APOSTOLIC GOVERNMENT

Following the ascension of Jesus, the eleven Apostles returned to Jerusalem to wait for the promised "baptism in the Holy Spirit." They were joined in their prayerful vigil by approximately one hundred twenty of Jesus' disciples. In this interim, there was only one item of business to conduct - the selection of a replacement for Judas. In accomplishing this goal, the group functioned congregationally.

And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry... For it is written in the book of Psalms,

*'Let his homestead be made desolate,
and let no man dwell in it; and,
His office let another man take.'*

It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in an out among us - beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us - one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection. "

And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed, and said "Thou, Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

(Acts 1:15-17, 20-26 NAS)

Here, prior to Pentecost and the reception of the Holy Spirit, we see a congregational style of government with *Peter's functioning as president*. The casting of lots is reminiscent of the Urim and Thummim of the Old Testament priest (Ex. 28:30; Nu. 27:21; 1 Sam. 28:6). This is the only New Testament record of a congregational form of government.⁵

B. POST-PENTECOSTAL APOSTOLIC GOVERNMENT

In the months immediately following the establishment of the Church, the Apostolic Council functioned as the government of the Church. Instead of the congregational style with a president, as displayed in Acts 1, the Holy Spirit instituted an apostolic rule. No other governmental roles

are mentioned in these early post-Pentecostal chapters of *Acts*. The apostles oversaw every aspect of the church. They even handled the treasury (*Acts* 2:43; 4:32-37; 5:2). This functional style continued for a period of twelve to eighteen months.⁶

C. THE FIRST MANAGERIAL ADDITION TO THE CHURCH⁷

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 And 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. But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word "

And 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 Nicola, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6 NAS)

The Church had grown to the point that the Apostles no longer were able to manage and oversee every detail of the Church's affairs. Because of this reality, seven men were chosen to be the administrators of the benevolent funds.

NOTE: Here is a clear example of the principle, *leaders may delegate a portion of their responsibility and authority to others, who will function in the leaders' stead*. The apostles signified the delegation of responsibility and authority by the laying on of hands.⁸ These seven men were to function as servants.⁹ They were given managerial, rather than governmental or ruling roles. They were to oversee one distinct aspect of the life of the Church.

SECTION TWO GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION TO ELDERS

The first record of a governmental change occurs in *Acts* Chapter Eleven. In the opening verse of the chapter, the Church is described as *Apostles and brethren*. *Brethren* is the general term for believers that Luke used in writing *Acts*.¹⁰ The first mention of *elders* is found in the last verse of Chapter Eleven.

And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders. (Acts 11:29-30 NAS)

As we already have noted, up this point the Apostles had handled the treasury. In verse 30, without any explanation of their origin, we are introduced to a council of elders. The Antioch Church did not send the benevolent offering to the Apostles, but to the elders. We are not told

when or how the Holy Spirit brought forth these men. However, from this point onward, the Jerusalem Church was not led by the Apostles, but by a council, consisting of the Apostles and elders. In time, the Apostles left the scene, and the Church was led by elders.¹¹

The Jerusalem Council, in which Paul and Barnabas defended their ministry among Gentiles, consisted of Apostles and elders. The account of the event describes the Apostles and elders together in an equal relationship.¹² Five times in this account, they are mentioned in this manner.¹³ For a season, the Apostles and elders were the governmental council of the Jerusalem Church.

In time, all of the Apostles except James left Jerusalem. So, when Paul visited Jerusalem several years later, he reported to James and *all the elders*.¹⁴

SECTION THREE

CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN PAUL'S

CHURCH PLANTING MINISTRY

When the Church spread beyond Jerusalem, the governmental pattern displayed in each place was a council of elders. This is seen in great clarity in the church-planting efforts of Paul. When Paul and Barnabas had reached the end of their first missionary journey, they retraced their steps, revisiting each church that they had planted. In each city, they installed elders as the government of the local church.

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God " And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed (Acts 14:21-23 NAS)

This became Paul's consistent pattern. Either he personally installed elders, or he left behind an apostolic delegate to lead the new church until elders had been installed. One example of Paul's commissioning of an apostolic delegate is the work of Titus in Crete.

...to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you. (Titus 1:4-5 NAS)

Timothy was another delegate whom Paul left behind to complete the development of a council of elders (see I Timothy 3).

SECTION FOUR

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOVERNMENTAL BODY IN THE LOCAL NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Contemporary churches tend to have three levels of leadership:

1. Bishops
2. Pastors
3. Elders

From the following Scriptures, we see that in the New Testament Church these three terms describe a single group of men, rather than three different groups.

Acts 20:17-18, 28

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

Paul and his traveling companions were sailing to Jerusalem, in order to be there for Pentecost. Enroute, they had to change ships at Miletus, a port-city about thirty miles from Ephesus. The travelers had to wait in Miletus for the winds to be right before the ship could leave for Jerusalem. The passengers had to be ready to board on short notice. Paul wanted to meet with the elders of the Ephesian Church, but he did not dare make the trip to Ephesus. The ship might have departed while he was in Ephesus. So, he called for the Ephesian elders to come to Miletus. If the ship set sail before the elders arrived, they would suffer only the inconvenience of the short journey. They did arrive before Paul's ship departed. Paul's charge to them is one of the most important passages of Scripture relating to elders.

The three terms pertinent to our study are found in Paul's exhortation.

1. *The **Elders** (*presbuteros*) of Ephesus were called to meet Paul at Miletus. v17*
2. *Paul stated that the Holy Spirit has made them **overseers** (bishops, *episkopos*)v28.*
3. *He instructed them to **shepherd** (pastor or feed, *poimaino*) the church.v28*

Thus, we see that the work of the elders of Ephesus was to oversee (bishop) the church and to shepherd (pastor) the church.¹⁵ There was not one group of men responsible for *elding*, another group responsible for *shepherding*, and another group, *bishoping*. There was a single group of men to whom all of three of these terms and activities applied.

I Peter 5:1-4

*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, **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; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*
(NAS)

Peter wrote this epistle to a broad audience, most of whom were far distant from him (I Peter 1:1). He probably had not met most of those who were the audience of this letter. So, the instructions can be taken to be very appropriate for all churches. In this passage, Peter uses the same terms for leadership that Paul had used in his exhortation to the Ephesian leaders.

- 1 . Peter addressed **elders** (*presbuteros*) v 1
- 2 . He instructed them to **shepherd** (pastor or feed, *poimaino*) the flock. v2
- 3 . He instructed them to exercise **oversight** (bishop, *episkopeo*) from the right motive. v2

Again, we see one group of men, elders, charged with the work of shepherding and overseeing (pastoring and bishoping) the church. There were not three different groups of men given these different functions or titles.

Titus 1:5-7

*For this reason I left you in Crete that you might set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you, namely, if a man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion, for the **overseer** must be above reproach as God's steward...* (NAS)

As noted above, when Paul had to leave a city before the Holy Spirit had raised up elders, it was his custom to return quickly and complete that task. If circumstances did not permit Paul to ordain elders in a new church, he would leave behind an apostolic delegate to remain in the city until elders were in place. Paul's letter to Titus contains instructions concerning the selection of elders for the new church in Crete. Again, we note terms that are relevant to our discussion.

- 1 . Paul left Titus in Crete to ordain **elders** (*presbuteros*) in every city. v5
- 2 . He used the term **overseers** (bishop, *episkopos*) to describe **elders** vs5,7

From these passages, it is clear that both Paul and Peter considered there to be one governmental group in the New Testament. The most common term used to describe these men is *elder*, (*presbuteros*). The work that they do is shepherding and overseeing the church.

Summary of terms

The term, *shepherd* (or *pastor*), is used as a noun only once in the New Testament to describe the leaders of the church.¹⁶ On all other occasions, it is a verb, *to shepherd* (or *pastor*), describing what church leaders (elders) do. Even in the passage where it is used as a noun, the term is a job description, rather than a title.

And He gave some as... pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service... (Ephesians 4:11 NAS)

The term, *overseer* (bishop), is used three times to describe the leaders of the local church.

- We already have noted Titus 1, in which elders and overseers are equated as being the same men.
- A second occurrence is I Timothy 3, in which Paul's description of qualifications for those who are selected to be overseers almost parallels what he wrote to Titus.
- The third occurrence is in the salutation of Philippians 1:1, in which Paul greets the two classes in leadership, overseers and deacons.

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

Since it is apparent from the other passages that Paul considered the elders to be the overseers of the church, both I Timothy 3:1ff and Philippians 1:1 would refer to the elders. It is natural to call one who does overseeing, an *overseer*.

Thus, in *Acts* and the epistles, the term most commonly used as the descriptive term for local church leadership is *elder*. The work that elders do is shepherding, and overseeing. These latter two terms, recognizing the function of elders, are used to describe them¹⁷ (pastors [one instance¹⁸] and overseers [three instances¹⁹]).

SECTION FIVE SERVANTS AND MANAGERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The selection of the seven servants, described in Acts 6, set the pattern for all future churches. Each local church had godly men who functioned in assigned areas of responsibility, under the oversight of the elders. As noted earlier, these men were called, *diakonoi*, or, as we have Anglicized the term, *deacons*. The translation of the Greek term is *servants* (see endnote 9).

Rather than constituting some sort of a church board, these were men and women who were given responsibility to manage and execute certain ministries in the church. Some would have one responsibility, and some another. They were not overseers of the church, but only overseers of those areas of responsibility that had been assigned to them.

The role of servant was not a role to be taken lightly. They were to be men

Of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. (Acts 6:3 NAS)

... men of dignity, not double-tongue, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let these also first be tested, then let them serve as deacons if they are above reproach. Women (or their wives) must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things ... the husbands of one wife, and good managers of their children and of their own households. For those who have served well as deacons, obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (I Timothy 3:8-13 NAS)

It is significant that the only two leadership roles for which qualifications are listed in the New Testament are those of elders (overseers) and servants.²⁰ This leads us to conclude two things:

- 1 . These were very important roles
2. These two leadership roles were expected to function in every church.

Evidence of the esteem for the servants in a church is seen in Paul's salutation to the Philippian church. As noted in the previous section, he began his epistle by giving special greeting to the *overseers and servants*. (Philippians 1:1)

One of the reasons for writing the *Epistle to the Romans* seems to have been to provide a church letter for Phoebe who was a *servant of the church which is at Cenchrea...* (Romans 16:1-2)

SECTION SIX THE PRINCIPLE OF PLURALITY

After the initial planting of a church, there always was plurality in the leadership of each congregation. We find no record of anyone who was *the elder*, or *the pastor*, or *the overseer*. In III John, Diotrephes who wanted to be *the leader*, is condemned for his desire to have the pre-eminence in the church.

I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be the first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, when I come I will call attention to his deeds... (III John 9-10 NAS)

Note that in all of the passages that we have examined, the terminology always is plural.

SECTION SEVEN MEN CANNOT MAKE MEN INTO ELDERS

A man does not become an elder by the choice of other men. There is no example in the New Testament of an elder's being elected by popular vote of the church. Instead, it is the Holy Spirit

who makes men elders. Paul told the Ephesian elders *the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.* (Acts 20:28)

Scripture makes it clear that Christ **gives** pastor/teachers to the local church.

... He ascended on high, ..He gave gifts to men ... and He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers
...(Ephesians 4:8, 11)

When church-planting is intentional, the pattern in the New Testament is for an apostolic band or an evangelist to bring the gospel to a city.²¹ When a church comes into existence, the apostle, or a delegate, or the evangelist, remains in the city leading the new flock. He continues in that role until the Holy Spirit raises up elders.

Not everyone who meets the qualifications of I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are elders, only those raised up by God. (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:7-8, 11).²²

Servants, on the other hand, seem to be selected either by the church, or by the elders.²³

SUMMARY

- 1 . Following the planting of a church, the church planter should anticipate the Holy Spirit's raising a group of men who will function as elders of the church.
2. There always will be a plurality, a council of elders.
3. The work of elders is shepherding (pastoring) and overseeing (bishops) every aspect of the life of the church.
4. The elders will delegate responsibility and authority to men and women in the church, who will have the oversight and implementation of specific ministries in the local body.

Endnotes:

¹ We have written an exhaustive treatment of this topic in *New Testament Church Leadership*, a 245 page book published by Doulos Press, available through Tulsa Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 50130, Tulsa, OK 74150.

² Some who have sought to duplicate the New Testament pattern have developed an elitist attitude, "We are right and all others are in error." This is not the position of this paper. This study is prepared to assist those who do seek to duplicate the New Testament model, without passing any judgment on those who opt for some other form of church government. I do not agree with to those who enter into crusades trying to impose one structure or another upon churches.

³ See *New Testament Church Leadership*, Chapter Two, "Church Planting Transitions: From Team to Council"

⁴ The term, *apostle* (*apostolos*), means, *one sent with a commission*. The term often is erroneously said to mean, *sent ones*. There are a number of Greek terms that refer to sending and each one has a particular emphasis. The emphasis of the term, *apostolos*, is not that someone has been sent, but that he has been *sent to do something*. The emphasis is upon what the one sent has been commissioned to do. The Twelve understood that they were commissioned to be witnesses to the resurrection of Christ (see Acts: 1:8; 1:21-22; 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:2, 33; 5:30; 10:39-42. For a complete study of this topic, see *New Testament Church Leadership*, Chapter 3, "Apostles, Then and Now"

⁵ The same *style* is found in Acts 6, but not the same *type*. In the instance before us, Peter clearly is the president. In Acts 6, the government is a council of apostles.

⁶ The attempts to arrange a chronology of *Acts* must begin with the arrival of Festus in Judea. This event is well established in Roman history as occurring in 60 AD. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem on Pentecost, two years prior to Festus' arrival (Acts 20:16; 24:27; etc.). Using this as a chronological peg and moving backwards into *Acts*, the data in the book lead to the conclusion that Paul's conversion would have been in 36 AD. The founding of the church would have been on Pentecost Sunday, in the month of May, 34 AD. From this, we conclude the following:

- Paul's persecution was conducted for several months prior to his conversion;
- his conversion was about two years after the founding of the Jerusalem Church;
- we conclude that the events in Acts 6 would have been between twelve and eighteen months after the founding of the Jerusalem church.

⁷ As contrasted with ruling

⁸ The implication of the Acts record is that after Pentecost only the apostles worked miracles (Acts 2:43; 5:12). With the launching of the ministry of the Seven, this changed. At least two of the Seven (Stephen and Philip – Acts 6:8; 8:6) *performed great signs and wonders among the people*. It could be textually inferred, though not proven, that Stephen and Philip received the anointing to perform signs and wonders at the laying on of the Apostles' hands. It also is noteworthy that both of these performed signs and wonders to credential their evangelistic activity, in conformity with the statement in Mark 16:20.

⁹ The Greek term, *diakonein*, "to serve," in verse 2, and, *diakonia*, "service," in verse 1, are forms of the term, *diakonos*, Anglicized as *deacon*. Because the title, *deacon*, has come to mean something far different from what *diakonos* meant in the New Testament, we would avoid many problems if we ceased using the Anglicized term and began using the English word, *servant*, which is the translation of the Greek term. (see, *New Testament Church Leadership*, Chapter 9, "The Role of Deacons in the New Testament Church")

¹⁰ Acts 1: 15; 6:3; etc.

¹¹ The Jerusalem Church of the First Century cannot be the norm by which we measure any other church. This is the only church that had the Twelve Apostles in residence. They obviously would be leaders and exercise authority in the congregation. It is significant, however, that a body of elders was raised up to serve with them as equals.

¹² Note the interesting manner in which this council functioned in Acts 15:

- Both sides of the debate presented their case before the council of apostles and elders, with the congregation as witness;
- The apostles and elders had discussion;
- One of the council members, James, delivered the consensus;
- The entire church confirmed the decision.

¹³ Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23

¹⁴ Acts 21:17-18

¹⁵ The terms, *pastor* and *bishop*, are old English words for *shepherd*, and *overseer*. Because these terms have taken on improper ecclesiastical significance, it would be better if their use in the church were discontinued. It would be better to use the translation of the Greek terms, *shepherd*, and *overseer*.

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:11

¹⁷ Even as one who builds houses is called a *builder*, so one who oversees is called an *overseer*

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:11

¹⁹ Philippians 1: 1; Titus 1:7; I Timothy 3:2 (Note: In most versions, the translation of I Timothy 3:1 does not convey, accurately, the sense of the Greek. The language used here implies one who aspires to the work of overseeing, not the office of overseer. It is the work that is to be desired, not the office).

²⁰ I Timothy 3; Titus 1

²¹ Not all church-planting is intentional. For example, when the Jerusalem Church was scattered by the persecution of Saul of Tarsus, the believers went everywhere preaching the Gospel. They were not setting out with the intention of planting a church. They were fleeing, but in that fleeing, they witnessed to the truth of the Gospel. As a result, churches were established.

²² How are elders given to the church? For an extended discussion of this question, see, *New Testament Church Leadership*, Chapter 8, "How One Becomes an Elder"

²³ Acts 6