

Membership Class – Wk 2

2. Structure

[30 min]

Tonight we want to look at church structure, hierarchy, and denominational polity.

Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up... Eph 4:11,12

In the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) we get additional positions of structure for the earliest church: bishops and deacons.

Then in *Acts 20* we have a record of Paul meeting with “presbyters” from Ephesus.

The fact is, like many things in the NT, these structural positions and HOW they are to be set up and to function are NOT clearly laid out.

Every denomination has worked out a way to grapple with it, but as someone who has engaged in NT scholarship there is not a clear biblical model. So we have to do our best to grapple with church structure.

The Catholic model started developing in the late first century – Didache and Clement of Rome come to mind. Bishops were over major cities or regions and pastors served under their leadership.

Since the Reformation, three basic church organizational structures have developed: episcopalian, congregational and some kind of blending of the two.

Episcopalian comes from the Greek term used in the Pastoral epistles: *episcopos* which is translated “bishop” or “overseer.”

This structure refers to the way pastoral leadership is organized and is usually hierarchical. This is the Catholic model where each pastoral leader (pastor, bishop or cardinal) has another positional leader who he/she must answer to.

In an Episcopalian church the local church does not select the pastor – the bishop appoints him/her. The local church cannot “fire” the pastor.

Then ultimately there is a highest position.

Catholic = Pope

Anglican = Archbishop

Assemblies of God = Superintendent

The “Free” church model mainly begins in the Protestant Reformation – being “free” from the “catholic” hierarchy and “free” from government influence (the Catholic Church had been partners with government for around 1,000 years). Most “free” church movements today do not hold to an episcopalian governmental structure. Each pastoral leader is basically autonomous, able to be “led” by the Spirit as he/she sees fit.

Most denominations use a blended government. So most Baptist churches operate under the “Free” model – no bishop, and the local pastor is basically on his own... with the exception that the local church can “vote” him out of his position.

The AG has a blend slightly different. Our pastoral leadership does operate under

an episcopal model, but the local church is autonomous and runs itself.

The denomination can call for the pastor to resign (it almost never happens) AND the local church can “vote” him out.

The purely “free” church congregational model has NO outside church governmental leadership. Each local church is 100% autonomous with some kind of leadership set up by the local church. This leadership is usually a mix of elders and deacons, and some kind of church board.

We are seeking to establish a mainly congregational church. We have NOT set everything up yet. Adding new members is part of our process – we want MORE team members to get more voices as we move

forward to set the leadership up in this church.

We have some denominational structures that cannot be changed – I am accountable to the denominational leadership and I am fine with this.

Where I am differing in this church is to place more emphasis on pastoral leadership serving under submission to local leadership than most AG pastors.

We will see how that works.

[30 min]

Questions?

[Break – 10 min]

Start Back at 7PM

Our Basic Structure

Senior Pastor > Pastoral Leadership

Congregational Leadership

Finance Committee

I read an article offered through Crosswalk titled “Seven Characteristics of an Effective Church Structure.”

I want to give you the seven points have some discussion that should help us get a better grasp of what my thinking is for TCC.

1. Most decisions can be, and usually are, made by those leading that specific ministry.

I agree.

Anyone who works with me knows that I am not a micro-manager. I believe in letting people do their thing. Point 2 goes along with this concept.

2. Staff/team leaders are allowed to build their own teams.

3. Policies and procedures are kept to a minimum.

I agree, but policies are helpful – it keeps you from having to walk through every single issue. Guidelines are good.

4. Votes are rare.

What do you guys think about voting in the church?

5. There is an annual financial audit along with strong internal controls regarding money.

I completely agree.

I do not think the pastoral staff should be directly involved in financial decision-making.

I think the lay leadership should respect the pastoral leadership, but the voice of the pastors is not assumed to be God's voice.

IF the church is operating properly the lay leadership should be trustworthy.

6. Organizational charts are kept fluid and nimble.

I agree.

7. Hierarchy is avoided.

I agree, but like any solid organization, the church needs some separation of powers, accountability and some kind of system with checks and balances.

I have found that leaders who do not want any hierarchy want to be in charge. I think that would be my commentary on Point 4, voting should be rare.