THE LOCAL CHURCH



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Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.
I Timothy 15:17



While the universal church is defined as being comprised of all believers between Acts 2 and the Rapture and consists of believers only, the local church has a different definition. While there is no stated New Testament definition of a local church, there are enough descriptions and enough details in the Bible concerning the normal features of a functioning local church for one to deduce a definition from all of the evidence at hand.

This study of the local church will be divided into eight sections: the definition, the purpose, church government, organization and leadership, church discipline, the Sabbath and Sunday, the meeting of the church, and the role of women in the local church.

I. THE DEFINITION

A definition of a local church is a group of professing believers in the Messiah who have been baptized and have organized themselves under the leadership of elders and deacons for the purpose of carrying out the Great Commission; for conducting the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; for building up of the Body through the worship of God, the fellowship of believers, the teaching of the Word, and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Some simply define the church as being "where two or three are gathered together." All Matthew 18:20 teaches is that where two or three are gathered together, the Messiah is in the midst of them. But this is not the definition of a local church. A local church is much more, than merely where two or three are gathered together.

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Because there is only one universal church, whenever the word "Church" is used of the universal church, it is found only in the singular. However, the word can be both singular or plural and both usages are found in the New Testament in connection with the local church. For example, in the singular sense, there is *the church which was in Jerusalem* (Acts 8:1; 11:22); the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:1); the Church of Ephesus (Acts 20:17); *the church that is at Cenchreae* (Rom. 16:1); the Church of Corinth (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1); the Church of Laodicea (Col. 4:16); and the Church of Thessalonica (I Thes. 1:1; II Thes. 1:1). All of these were local churches; because there was one local church in each of these areas, the word was used in the singular. Because there are many local churches, the word can also be found in the plural. For example, the Bible speaks of *the churches of Galatia* (Gal. 1:2); the churches of Judea (Gal. 1:22; I Thes. 2:14); and the churches of Asia (Rev. 1:4).

One last thing by way of defining exactly what a local church is: the local church is also the Temple of God. According to the Scriptures, there are three facets of the Temple of God today. First, the individual believer is a Temple of God because his body is the place where the Holy Spirit resides (I Cor. 6:19). Secondly, the universal church is a Temple of God (Eph. 2:19-22). And thirdly, the local church is also a Temple of God (I Cor. 3:16-17).

II. THE PURPOSES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

In the second section of this study, there are thirteen purposes for the local church. The first purpose is to teach Bible doctrine, to teach the content of Scripture, to teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 2:42; 11:26; I Tim. 3:15-16).

The second purpose is that the local church must exercise the function of priesthood (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 8:1-15; Phil. 4:18). All believers are a priesthood and every believer is to exercise the function of a priest, which is representing the people to God.

The third purpose is for corporate prayer. Not only is the believer to pray as an individual, but believers should also pray corporately as a local body so they can agree with each other and seek the guidance of God or make petitions of God in their prayer life (Acts 2:42; 4:31; 12:5, 12; Heb. 13:15).

The fourth purpose is for the observance of the ordinances. These ordinances are: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:23-29).

The fifth purpose of the local church is to exercise spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12, 13, 14).

The sixth purpose of the local church is the exercise of both church

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discipline and spiritual discipline (I Cor. 5:1-13; II Thes. 3:14-15; I Tim. 5:20).

The seventh purpose of the local church is to send out missionaries around the world (Acts 11:22-24; 13:1-4).

An eighth purpose is to provide for the needy in general, but in particular, the needy among believers (Acts 6:1-6; II Cor. 8:4-7; I Tim. 5:16; Jas. 1:27).

The ninth purpose is to make disciples, and to disciple believers until they are firmly grounded in the Word of God. Discipleship involves three elements: preaching the gospel, baptism, and teaching the Word of God (Mat. 28:18-20).

The tenth purpose of the local church is to build up the Body of the Messiah. The Body of the Messiah is the universal church, but the universal church is comprised of many local churches, all of believers (Eph. 4:11-16). This is in order that individual members of the Body might be firmly planted and rooted in the Word of God, so they are no longer tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

The eleventh purpose of a local church is to do good in this world in general, but emphasizing especially good to those who are of *the household of faith* (Gal. 6:10).

The twelfth purpose is to show the love of the Messiah so that the world can see the believer's love for Him (Rev. 2:4-5).

The thirteenth purpose of the local church is to glorify God in its ministry (Rom. 15:6, 9; Eph. 3:21; II Thes. 1:12; I Pet. 4:11).

III. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The third section of the study of the local church discusses the question: Exactly what is the biblical form of church government? Different denominations have different forms of government, and this section will be divided into five parts based on the different forms of church governments that exist.

A. The National Church Form

The first form of church government to be discussed is known as the "national church" form, which is mostly a product of church history rather than biblical teaching. In this system, the head of the state is also the head of the church. For example, whoever happens to be the king or the queen of England is the head of the Church of England. Whoever happens to be the head of the various nations in Scandinavia is also the head of the Lutheran church of that particular Scandinavian country.

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The problem with national churches, of course, is that the head is often an unbeliever since, unfortunately, most of the kings have not been believers. Think of someone like Henry VIII and others who were automatically head of the national church.

Of course, in the New Testament there is no such thing as a national church. In fact, the church and the state were to be separate. Furthermore, the church is in subjection to the state, not the state to the church. Therefore, the national church form of government, although it still exists in the world today and has existed for many centuries in church history, is not a biblical form of church government.

B. The Hierarchial or Episcopalian Form

The second type of church government goes by two different names: either hierarchial or episcopalian. This is not in reference to the episcopal denomination as such, but it is episcopalianism in the sense that it describes a specific type of church government. Perhaps for that reason the term "hierarchial" is better because it does not confuse one with any particular denomination. While what is said about the hierarchial form of church government might also be true of the episcopal denomination, it is not only the Episcopal Church that functions in this particular way.

The hierarchial or episcopalian form of government is ruled by a bishop or some kind of a church leader by some other name or designation who, by virtue of his office, has the power of directing the local church. It is the bishop who governs the church and the bishop alone has the power to ordain. The hierarchial or episcopalian form of government is based on a concept of apostolic succession. This concept teaches that there has been a continuous line of ordination from the apostles to the present time and that their particular group has maintained that line.

Again, supporters of the hierarchial or episcopalian form of government base it on the doctrine of apostolic succession. However, this is not the New Testament teaching. There are no New Testament examples of any such instruction for succession. The Bible does not view the Church as some kind of royalty that is to be handed down from dynasty to dynasty; the Bible simply does not teach apostolic succession.

In fact, in the first three centuries of church history there was a total absence of any early historical succession. The concept of apostolic succession only arises in the fourth century A.D., after the religion of Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, the very uniqueness of the apostolic office would not allow for it to be transmitted. It should be pointed out that the gift of apostleship required certain prerequisites or conditions. For example:

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first, for one to qualify to be an apostle he had to have seen the resurrected Messiah; secondly, one who was an apostle was like a prophet in that he received direct revelation from God. Therefore, the very uniqueness of the apostolic office would not allow for it to be transmitted by some form of apostolic succession.

In the hierarchial or episcopalian form of government, there is always an order of clergy or an order of priesthood which are distinct from the laity, and yet the Bible teaches the priesthood of all believers. This biblical teaching disallows a special order of priests.

Again, this form of government is not found anywhere in the New Testament. As a form of government, it only appears in the fourth century and then it was backed up by a doctrine of apostolic succession, which originated only in the fourth century.

There are several groups that follow this hierarchial or episcopalian form of government. These include the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, and the Lutheran Church. The degree of power varies from group to group, but nevertheless contains some degree of hierarchial or episcopal order. The basic order or chain of command in this form of government begins with the bishop or bishops at the top, below them are the elders or priests, and below them are deacons.

C. The Federal or Presbyterian Form

Another form of church government is known as the "federal" or "presbyterian." Both of these names apply to the same form. By way of definition, a federal or presbyterian form of government is one in which there exists a representative form of government. It recognizes the authority of duly appointed representatives of local churches that are usually grouped geographically.

The local church itself is governed by a session, composed of ruling elders elected by the membership, with the teaching elder or the minister as the presiding officer. The teaching elders are ordained by other ministers, but the ruling elders are ordained by the congregation.

In addition to the church's being ruled by a session, there is a higher order in the chain of command known as the "presbytery." All ordained ministers or teaching elders and one ruling elder from each church in a given district comprise the presbytery. These groups of presbyteries comprise the next order, which is the synod. Then groups of synods comprise the next order, which is the highest ruling body, the general assembly.

The basic setup within the local church in this form of government has elders and deacons, which follows the New Testament order with two exceptions. First, in this system, the ruling elders are elected by

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the congregation, whereas in the biblical form of government, the ruling elders are not elected by the congregation. Secondly, they usually have just one teaching elder, whereas the biblical form requires a plurality of teaching elders. This system has led to denominational structures such the Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Church, but denominational structure is not in the New Testament. The New Testament does not have a general assembly, a synod, or a presbytery. What it has is local churches that are independent under certain authorities which will be discussed later.

Some examples of groups that follow this form of church government include the Presbyterian and the Reformed churches, such as the Dutch Reformed Church and the Christian Reformed Church, among others.

D. The Congregational Form

The fourth form of church government is known as the "congregational" form and is based on the belief that no man or group should have authority over the local church. The source of authority in the local church is with the people of that local congregation. Important matters are decided by the congregants without respect to the authority of other churches, other hierarchies, or even officials within that local church.

Some examples of groups that follow the congregational form of government include the Baptists, the Evangelical Free Church, the Disciples of Christ, the Congregationalists such as the United Church of Christ, and some Independent Bible Churches. While the congregational form of government is rather popular, the question must always be: is it a biblical form of government? Is this the kind of church government the Bible teaches and speaks about? There are six arguments used to support the congregational form of government.

1. To Preserve Unity

One favored argument used is that it is the duty of the whole church to preserve the unity of the church. Those who use this argument normally cite five passages of Scripture. One is Romans 12:6, but this passage deals with the use of spiritual gifts, not with church government. Another passage is I Corinthians 1:10, but this verse also says nothing about church government. A third passage is II Corinthians 13:11, but this verse also says nothing about church government. The fourth passage used is Ephesians 4:2, but this verse says nothing about church government. Finally, Philippians 1:27 is used, but this verse says nothing about church government either.

When it is said that it is the duty of the whole church to preserve the unity of the church, this is a true statement. But this statement says nothing about church government. The passages that are used to try to prove it in no way indicate the teaching that this is the form of church government.

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While every believer has responsibilities and the whole local church has responsibilities, that by itself does not prove that the congregants are the government. The Bible does not teach a congregational form of government.

2. To Maintain Purity of Doctrine and Practice

The second argument used to support congregationalism is that it is the responsibility of the whole church to maintain pure doctrine and practice. Two main passages are used to support this argument. The first is I Timothy 3:15, but the context of this passage is dealing with church leaders, not the congregation as a whole. The second passage used is Revelation 2 and 3, but the letters of Revelation 2 and 3 are addressed to the angels of the churches.

It is indeed the responsibility of the whole church to maintain pure doctrine and practice, but that by itself does not reveal what kind of government the local church should have, and by itself does not prove any kind of a teaching in favor of a congregational form of government.

3. To Receive the Ordinances

The third argument used to favor congregationalism points out that ordinances were committed to the whole church. Four passages are cited to prove this point. The first passage is Matthew 28:19-20, which states what the Great Commission is, but says nothing of church government. It reveals what the purpose of the local church should be, but does not state what the government should be.

The second passage is Luke 24:33, but this verse also says nothing about church government, only the fact that others were present with the apostles in the upper room.

The third passage is Acts 1:15. This verse does not say anything about ordinances, but simply states something unique when Peter took charge; this would seem to teach something contrary to the congregational form of government, only that other men were present with the apostles in the upper room.

The fourth passage used for this argument is I Corinthians 15:6, but this passage also says nothing about church government, only that Jesus appeared to five hundred others besides the apostles.

The fact is that, even if the ordinances were committed to the whole church, this still teaches nothing about the government of that local church, only that Jesus appeared to five hundred other believers besides the apostles.

4. To Elect Officers

The fourth argument used in favor of a congregational form of government is to point out that the church elects its own officers, and

here six different passages are cited.

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The first passage is Acts 1:23-26, where Mathias is chosen to replace Judas as an apostle. The problem with using this passage is that the choosing of Mathias was made by the casting of lots and not even congregationalists will use lots to decide how the congregation should elect its deacons.

A second verse used is Acts 3:5, but this verse says nothing about church government.

The third passage is Acts 6:3 and 5, in which the apostles ask the congregants to choose men to serve as deacons. But the order for the selection came from the apostles. Furthermore, these apostles were simply asking the church for recommendations as to who would qualify as a deacon, because a congregation can recognize people who have those spiritual gifts that will apply to the office of a deacon or the office of an elder. Actually, these deacons were appointed by the apostles, not elected by the congregation.

The fourth passage is Acts 13:2-3, but this passage says nothing about the election of officers; it only speaks about the sending out of missionaries. Furthermore, Acts 13:1 clearly emphasizes the leadership of the prophets and teachers in that local church, when Paul and Barnabas were sent out to be missionaries.

The fifth passage used is Acts 15:2, 4, 22, and 30, but if one looks at the context, it is not dealing with the congregation's making decisions, the emphasis is clearly on the apostles and the elders who make those decisions.

The last verse used in this area is II Corinthians 8:19, but again, this passage, while it lays an obligation upon the local church, says nothing of church government. Therefore, this fourth argument is not supported either.

5. To Exercise Discipline

The fifth argument used to support the congregational form of government is to point out that it is the power of the whole church to exercise discipline, and here three passages are cited. The first is Matthew 18:17, but in that context, the act of bringing a sinning brother before the congregation is by the leaders of the church. Again, the text itself does not deal with the issue of church government.

Also cited is I Corinthians 5:4, 5, and 13, but this passage also says nothing about church government, and indeed other Scriptures place the responsibility of discipline upon the church leaders.

The final passage used is II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, and 15, but this passage also says nothing about church government. Even though the

whole church may be involved to some degree in church discipline, the responsibility is with the leaders, and none of these passages actually speaks of a congregational form of government.

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6. To Establish Ranks of Leaders

The sixth argument used to support congregationalism is to cite I Timothy 3:1-13, where there is a singular bishop spoken of in verses 1-7, but many deacons in verses 8-13. However, if one looks at 5:17 of the same book, he will find the word "bishop" in the plural, so that does not prove anything either.

7. Conclusion

None of the passages cited actually support the concept of a congregational form of government. None of these passages teaches or portrays the congregational form of government. In fact, as with the other forms covered so far, the congregational form of government is not found anywhere in Scripture.

E. The Biblical Form

The biblical form of government is that each church is totally independent from one another. There is no hierarchy of authorities over many churches, and no denominational structure. The various evidences that are used to support a congregational form of government are really evidences for the independence of the local church. There is no higher spiritual court of appeals than the local church.

But what about the government within each independent local church? Each local church is to be ruled by a plurality of elders and they are the authority of the church. The authority does not reside with the congregation, as is taught by the congregational form of government. The relationship of the elders to the people is often that of shepherds and sheep. Yet in a congregational form of government, the sheep are the ones who are telling the shepherd such things as how much he can eat, what he can or cannot do, where he can live. This is hardly a biblical relationship. Each local church is ruled by elders, not a singular elder who can let power go to his head and become a dictator, but rather each local church is ruled by a plurality of elders who are coequal.

Examples of groups that are following this form of church government are Brethren Churches and Independent Bible Churches. In the last several decades, many Independent Bible Churches have been springing up throughout the country.

The best way of defending this form of church government as being the biblical form is by moving on to the fourth section in this study of the local church.

IV. CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

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The fourth section will show that the biblical form of government is rule by a plurality of elders, not by a congregation nor by a hierarchy nor by a national head. This section will be divided into five areas.

A. The Fact of Organization

The first area answers the question: Is a New Testament local church organized? There are those who teach that a local church is whenever two or three people are gathered in the Messiah's name, therefore, it does not have to be organized. But in the New Testament, is a local church organized or is it a haphazard coming together of believers?

The fact that the New Testament church was very well organized is evidenced by twelve things. First, the local church had stated, planned, and scheduled meetings, which required organization (Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:25).

Secondly, the local church had recommendations for deacons, which required organization (Acts 6:1-6).

Thirdly, the local church had officers. The nature of an officer is that he is an officer of an organization (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1).

Fourthly, the local church was to exercise discipline, which required an organizational structure (I Cor. 5:4 5, 13).

Fifth, the local church was to take up contributions and make records of contributions, and this always required organization (Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 8:6-9:5).

The sixth evidence of organization in the local church was that sometimes letters would have to be written recommending someone from one congregation to another, and this showed organization (Acts 18:24-28; Rom. 16:1; II Cor. 3:1; Col. 4:10).

The seventh evidence of the fact of the organization of the local church was the registration of widows. They were to be registered so that the church could deal responsibly with them, especially those in need. Responsibilities like this required organization (Acts 6:1; I Tim. 5:9).

Eighth, the local churches were to follow certain uniform customs, which were common to all assemblies of believers. For that to be a reality, required some degree of organization. An example of common, uniform customs is found in I Corinthians 11:16, where Paul points out that what he has just taught to the Corinthians in verses 1-15 is not only true of them, it is also true of all the assemblies, no

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matter where they are, no matter which culture they may be living in. The ninth evidence for the organization of the local church is that they did follow uniform ordinances. They were to follow the same ordinances regardless of where they were. These two ordinances were baptism and the Lord's Supper. The very existence of uniform ordinances and the practice of them reveals organization (Acts 2:41-42, 46; I Cor. 11:23-26).

The tenth evidence of church organization is that there was order that had to be maintained in the worship services so that things did not get out of hand, so that things would not become chaotic and confused (I Cor. 14:40; Col. 2:5; I Thes. 5:14; II Thes. 3:6-7).

The eleventh evidence for organization is that the local church was to keep a count of membership, and they always knew how many were added to the church (Acts 2:42; 4:4). The fact that the numbers of believers were kept in records shows the fact of organization.

The twelfth argument that shows that the local church is to be an organized element is that the churches had decorum. There were certain rules and regulations to be practiced in the meetings. The responsibility for the maintaining of this proper decorum was upon the elders. The very fact of church decorum again emphasizes organization (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:13; 14:34, 40; III Jn. 5-12).

In conclusion, it is clear that the New Testament local church was not a group of disorganized believers coming together haphazardly, but it had a very well maintained degree of organization.

B. Elders

The second area that shows organization and leadership is the office of eldership. Elders are the ruling body of the local church. The office of eldership will be discussed in eight aspects.

1. The Nature of the Office

The first aspect deals with the nature of the office of an elder. This can be seen from three specific terms which are used in describing elders.

The first term is "elder." The Greek word is *presbuteros* from which the word "presbytery" comes. The word "elder" emphasizes the office itself and the position of authority that lies with the office.

A second term for the same office is "bishop." The Greek word is *episkopos*, which is the origin of the English word "episcopal." This term emphasizes the function of the office, and that is general oversight (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 2:25).

The third main term used of the same office is the word "pastor." The Greek word is *poimanos*, which emphasizes the aspect of shepherding

and feeding (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 2:25; 5:1-2).

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These three terms describe the office. They are not three different offices, but are three different terms describing the same office. The best way of proving this is to notice the Scriptures where these terms are used of the same body of leaders. For example, in Acts 20:17 and 28, all three terms are applied to the same body of leaders. Another example is I Timothy 3:1-7 compared with 5:17 and with 3:4; again, these different terms are used for the same body of people. Another example is Titus 1, comparing verse 5 with verse 7. One more example is I Peter 5:1-2. Once again, these terms are used of the same body of leaders.

Furthermore, the concept of "elder" originated from the concept of the elders of Israel who had authority within the body of Israel. The elder form of church government is to be preferred over the national, hierarchial or episcopal, federal or presbyterian, and congregational governments because this is the biblical form and it naturally arises out of God's previous dealings with Israel. The concept of a church government did not arise out of a vacuum.

Remember, all of the early church leaders and members were Jews, and they would naturally have brought in much of their Jewish frame of reference when the Church was born. Therefore, the concept of "elder" arises out of the elder within the nation of Israel who was able to exercise authority. It is not the congregation of the synagogue that exercises authority, it is the elders of the synagogue. By the same token, it is these elders in the local church that actually rule the church. From a Jewish frame of reference, this is the biblical form of government; it is encouraging to see more and more churches switching over to this form of government as they see clearly what the Bible teaches.

The nature of the office of an elder, then, is threefold: that of an elder to rule, a bishop to oversee, and a pastor to shepherd and feed the flock.

2. The Number of Elders

The second aspect about the office of an elder is the question of number: How many elders should a church have? The answer is: a plurality. The Bible never envisioned one pastor over a congregation. This is always dangerous and has led to some pastors becoming dictatorial over the congregants. Whenever the Bible speaks of a local church and its elders, it is always a plurality of elders, not a singular elder over many (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; Jas. 5:14). By having a plurality of qualified elders, there naturally exists checks and balances, so if one elder goes off on a tangent, he can be corrected by the others.

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3. Types of Elders

The third aspect of the office of an elder discusses the question: What are the different types of elders? There are two types of elders according to I Timothy 5:17: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.*

This passage mentions two types of elders: ruling elders and teaching elders. The structure of this verse shows that all elders are in a position of ruling because they are the highest authority in the local church, but among the ruling elders, you will have some who are also teaching elders. All elders should have the gift of administration, because all elders are ruling elders, but not all ruling elders would necessarily have the gift of teaching. Furthermore, there should not be many ruling elders and only one teaching elder, rather, there should be a plurality in both capacities. There should be a plurality of ruling elders, and within that group, a plurality of teaching elders as well.

In conclusion, there are two types of elders, ruling elders and teaching elders, and Paul writes that both are to receive financial remuneration, especially the teaching elders.

4. The Duties of the Elder

The fourth aspect of the office of an elder discusses the question: What are the duties of an elder? First, they are to rule, which is emphasized by the title of elder (I Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17; I Thes. 5:12).

A second duty the elders have is to oversee, which spells out their responsibility as bishops (I Tim. 3:1; 5:1-3).

Thirdly, they are to feed the flock, which emphasizes their office as pastors (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).

The fourth responsibility or duty is to guard right doctrine. They are to make sure that true doctrine is taught and that false doctrine is pointed out (Titus 1:9; Acts 15:1-6; 15:22-29; 16:4; Heb. 13:17).

A fifth responsibility of an elder is to anoint the sick, if called upon by a sick believer. If the sick believer knows that his sickness is due to a specific sin, then he is to call for the elders of the church, who are to anoint him (Jas. 5:14-15).

A sixth responsibility of an elder is to supervise financial matters (Acts 11:27-30).

5. The Traveling Elder

The fifth aspect of the office of an elder deals with the traveling elder. For the most part, elders were situated in one city and they were leaders over one particular local congregation. It is interesting to note that the apostles were also called "elders" and yet they were not necessarily stationary in one place, but were traveling from place to

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place, either planting churches or strengthening existing churches. For example, apostles are called elders in I Peter 5:1; II John 1; and III John 1. There are examples in the New Testament of traveling elders. What this means is that a person was ordained to be an elder, and rather than being an elder of one particular congregation, he was ordained with the authority to teach, and could travel and be in a different role than that of a ruling elder of a local church. A traveling elder would function only as a teaching elder as he travels from place to place. A traveling elder can also be a church planter, and in that capacity he would function as the first elder of the new local church.

6. Qualifications

The sixth aspect of the office of an elder answers the question: What are the qualifications for eldership in a local church? There are two main passages in the New Testament that detail the qualifications of an elder.

a. I Timothy 3:1-7

Faithful is the saying, If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knows not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

The first qualification this passage teaches is that one must desire this position. He must not be pushed into it, but must desire to be an elder.

The second qualification is that he must be above reproach. He should not be open to criticism.

The third qualification is that he must be the husband of one wife, or literally, the New Testament Greek text reads "a one woman man." This could be taken in two ways. First, it might mean "one wife ever," which is the implication of the same type of construction found in I Timothy 5:9. If so, this could be applied in two ways. First, if a person were divorced and remarried, this would disqualify him from the job of an elder; and secondly, if a person were widowed and remarried, this would also disqualify him from being an elder, because an elder should have only one wife ever. A second way to take this passage is to interpret it as specifically against adultery or polygamy, and therefore, would not exclude a single man or a remarried widower. The way the Greek reads it could be taken either way, so one must tread lightly here; every local church must make its own decision about what it feels this passage means, and then consistently function accordingly and not make exceptions to the rule depending on each case. It is when a church acts inconsistently on this matter that bad feelings arise.

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The fourth qualification is to be temperate. He should not be given to excesses in life. He should be mentally alert and able to make sound judgments.

The fifth qualification is that he must be prudent. He must be sensible and of sound mind. He must have self-control, is not impulsive.

Sixth, he must be respectable. He must be characterized by good behavior and have a well-ordered life.

Seventh, he must be hospitable. He must exercise a love of strangers, a love of hospitality to people in general, not only to those close to him.

Eighth, he should be able to teach. This does not necessarily require the gift of teaching, but he should have a minimum amount of ability to teach. It was pointed out that there are two types of elders, teaching elders and ruling elders; even the ruling elders must have some ability to teach, although they may not have the same ability as those with the gift of teaching.

Ninth, he is not to be addicted to wine. Literally, the Greek term here means "no one who sits too long at his wine." This verse does not teach that an elder must practice total abstention. It simply means that he should not be characterized by drunkenness or any form of over indulgence. If he knows how to partake of wine in moderation, then he still qualifies.

Tenth, he should not be a striker, not given to physical violence. Men who are guilty of wife or child abuse do not qualify.

Eleventh, he should be gentle and patient.

Twelfth, he should not be contentious; he should not be a brawler.

Thirteenth, he should not be a lover of money; he should not be characterized by covetousness or greediness.

Fourteenth, his children are to be in subjection. He should be able to rule his own house. The fact that the children are in subjection shows that the person has exercised discipline over his children. If a person is not able to exercise discipline over his children, what will he do if he must exercise church discipline?

Fifteenth, he must not be a new believer because, by virtue of being a new believer, he is automatically spiritually immature. If this person were placed in a position of authority before he is spiritually ready for it, then he might be filled with pride. This is the same sin that brought about the fall of Satan. Therefore, never put a new believer in the position of an elder.

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And the sixteenth qualification is that he must have a good reputation with those outside the church. He must be of good repute with the people in the world, the people outside the church. They may not respect his beliefs, but they should respect his conduct and his way of life.

These are the sixteen qualifications spelled out in I Timothy 3:1-7 and if elders are appointed who have these qualifications, then there will be a smooth running eldership. There are problems among elder ruled churches, but the fault is not with church government because that is the biblical form of church government. The problem is with unqualified elders.

b. Titus 1:6-9

if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober minded, just, holy, self controlled; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.

This passage also lists seventeen qualifications of an elder. Some of these are the same as those in the first passage but some are different. First, he must be above reproach.

Secondly, he must not be self willed; he must not be pleased with himself; he must not be arrogant.

Thirdly, he must not be easily angered; he must be even tempered.

Fourthly, he must not be addicted to wine. Again, the term here does not mean total abstention. If anything, it means that an elder must know how to drink moderately. No one characterized by drunkenness should ever be in a position of an elder, only those who know how to handle these things moderately.

Fifth, he should not be a striker or a brawler. He should not be characterized by physical violence. Anyone who is an abuser of his wife or children should not be in this position.

Sixth, he should not be greedy for gain. The love of money should not be a characteristic of his.

Seventh, he should be hospitable, given to hospitality, exercising a love of strangers.

Eighth, he should love that which is good. His thoughts, his attitude, and his behavior should be concerned with the good; the kind of things he should be concerned about are listed in Philippians 4:8.

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Ninth, he should be sensible. He should be characterized as being a sensible person, knowing how to reason things out.
Tenth, he should be a devout person. His life should be characterized by holiness. He should be performing his duties to God; he should be practicing practical holiness.

Eleventh, he should be characterized by self control. His life should be temperate; it should be disciplined.

Twelfth, he should be the husband of one wife. Again, the way the Greek reads it could be taken to mean "one wife ever," and in this sense, it means that no single person should be in a position of an elder, and no one who has been divorced and remarried should be an elder, no one who has been widowed and remarried should be an elder. A second legitimate way of taking the Greek is that it speaks of adultery and polygamy which would not exclude a single man nor would it exclude a widower who remarried. Either one is a valid way of taking this Scripture because the Greek allows for both. Every individual local church should make their own decision about how they are going to stand on this point and then act consistently in accordance with their stand.

Thirteenth, he should have believing children. The Greek term here does not necessarily require the children to be believers in the sense of having salvation because the Greek word could simply mean "faithful" or "reliable" children. One should have children that can be relied upon, that have been disciplined and brought up correctly. As it reads, it may not be necessary for the children of an elder to be believers themselves.

Fourteenth, he should not be characterized by rebelliousness, but should be characterized by a spirit of submissiveness to the Word and to the will of the other elders who may overrule him at times.

Fifteenth, he should hold solid doctrine. He should know what the solid doctrines of the Word of God are, and should not be characterized by wishey washiness in his theology.

Sixteenth, he should be able to exhort in sound doctrine. This means not only teaching sound doctrine, but also applying sound doctrine in those situations where false teachings might arise in the church.

And seventeenth, he must also be able to refute false doctrine. If someone starts to teach false doctrine in the local church, he should be able to take the Word of God and prove that their doctrines are wrong, that they are deviating from the truth, and exhort accordingly.

These are the seventeen qualifications of an elder within the confines of Titus 1:6-9. If one puts these passages of Titus and Timothy

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together, an elder has quite a number of qualifications, and it is very important that no one is appointed to the office of an elder unless he meets all of these qualifications. Churches that follow the biblical form of government and have eldership rule often have great problems anyway, but not because there is something wrong with the type of church government. The problem is with people who were put into that office who have never met these particular qualifications.

7. Ordination

The seventh aspect of the office of an elder deals with the question: How is an elder ordained to his office? One thing that has been learned under the section on church government is that they are not elected by the congregation. The congregational form of government is not the government of Scripture. Rather, ordination is specifically by appointment. Paul wrote in Titus 1:5: *For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave you charge.*

A plurality of elders in each city, for each local church, were to be appointed. Elders are appointed to their office, not elected. They are appointed by other elders because it is other elders who can see if a person has met these qualifications. A congregation tends to elect on the bases of likes and dislikes and popularity, but those are not the qualifications of an elder. It takes other elders to determine if a person is qualified, and if he is and desires the office, then he can be appointed as an elder.

This is not to be done without an investigation of those qualifications listed in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. For example, Paul wrote in I Timothy 5:22: *Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep yourself pure.*

The laying on of hands is the way the appointment of elders comes, and they are not to do so suddenly.

That the manner of ordination was the laying on of hands is seen in Acts 13:1-3, where Paul and Barnabas were ordained to be traveling elders and to go out to establish other churches. In I Timothy 4:12-16, Paul admonished Timothy concerning the appointment of elders, and that, too, was done by the laying on of hands.

Concerning ordination then, there are three things to note: first, it is by appointment by other elders; secondly, only after careful investigation is the appointment made; and thirdly, the appointment is made by means of the laying on of hands.

8. Rewards

The eighth aspect of the office of an elder answers the question: What will be the rewards of the elders if they fulfill their roles in the biblical way? According to I Peter 5:4, those who do fulfill their roles in a biblical way will receive as their reward one of the five crowns of Scripture: *the crown of glory.*

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C. Deacons

The third area of the organization and leadership of the local church discusses the office of deaconship. This office will be studied in six parts.

1. The Nature of the Office

The nature of the office can best be seen by looking at the Greek word that means "deacon." The Greek word is *diakonos*, which has the meaning of "servant." It is translated as "servant" or "servanthood" in I Corinthians 3:5; II Corinthians 6:3; Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:23; and I Timothy 1:12.

Deacons are the servants of the elders. Many American congregations have misconstrued the office of deacon, especially those that follow a non biblical form of church government, such as the congregational form. Often the deacons are the ones who are the ruling body; they are the ones who decide whether they are going to fire or hire a pastor.

In the Bible, the office of the deacon has no authority attached to it. The office of a deacon was to recognize people who had the gift of serving and the gift of helps, and these became the servants to the elders. The elders were the authority, and the deacons were servants to the elders to help the leaders carry out their function in order that the elders could spend their time primarily in the Word of God.

2. The Number of Deacons

How many deacons should the local church have? Not one, but a minimum of two or more because every church discussed in the Bible had a plurality of deacons (Acts 6:1 6; Phil. 1:1). As each local church should have a plurality of elders, even so, there should be a plurality of deacons.

3. The Duties of the Deacons

There are two main duties of the deacon described in the Word of God. The first duty is that of being a helper of the elders. They are to give aid to the elders; they are the servants of the elders to help carry out the various functions that elders must oversee (Acts 6:1-6). The reason that the office of deacons arose in the local church of Jerusalem had to do with the physical functions and needs of the local church which could be handled by the deacons so that the elders could spend their time in the Word of God and in teaching.

The second main duty of a deacon is to be in charge of charity for the needy and to minister in physical things. The deacons are to take charge of the charity part of the ministry of the local church and take control in ministering to the physical needs of the church (Acts 6:1-6; I Tim. 3:13).

The deacon body is in a position of helping, not ruling. The deacons

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are the ones who should make hospital calls, not the elders; the deacons are the ones who should make house calls, not the elders. This is in order that the elders can spend their time in teaching and in the Word of God.

4. Qualifications

There are certain qualifications necessary for one to be a deacon. These qualifications are listed in I Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13.

Verses 8-10 state: *Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless.*

Verse 12-13 state: *Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
The qualifications for deacons are not as extensive as those for elders. Since this is not a leadership position, but a servant position, there is no need to have as many qualifications as with elders. But one must have some qualifications nonetheless because this is a specific part of church organization.

The first qualification is that a deacon must be a man of dignity; he must have seriousness of mind and character; he must be characterized by integrity.

Secondly, he must not be *double-tongued*, meaning he must be truthful in all things.

Thirdly, he must not be addicted to wine. Again, the expression here does not mean total abstention; it refers to addiction. He must not be characterized by drunkenness; if he has learned to partake moderately, then he is permitted to be a deacon.

Fourthly, he must not be greedy for gain. Love of money must not be his characteristic.

Fifth, he must hold the faith in good conscience. He himself must be convinced of the truths of the teachings of the local church and more so of the Scriptures, and hold that faith in good conscience.

Sixth, he should be tested before being allowed to serve. Indeed, he must be known to have the gift of serving.

Seventh, he must be the husband of one wife. Again, this could be taken as either "one wife ever" or simply as a statement against polygamy. As in the case of elders, each local church must decide how they are going to act on this and then have a consistent policy.

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Eighth, he must be a good manager of his children. If he cannot manage the physical aspects of his household, how could he manage the physical needs of the church?

These are the eight qualifications of a deacon, and if a person meets these eight qualifications, he can be appointed as a deacon. Being a deacon could be a good training ground to eventually qualify him for eldership of a local church.

5. Ordination

Deacons are ordained by the same means as the elders: by the laying on of hands. This is seen in Acts 6:6, where the elders of the Jerusalem Church ordained the deacons by the laying on of hands. Whereas elders are ordained by other elders because that is the highest authority in the local church, deacons are also ordained by elders. Deacons are not ordained by other deacons because deaconship is not an authoritative office.

6. Rewards

If he serves well, the deacon's reward is given in I Timothy 3:13: *For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
This reward includes three things. First, he will receive *a good standing* before God. Secondly, while in that office, he will develop *boldness in the faith*, which in turn, could later qualify him for a higher calling. Thirdly, faithful service in the office of a deacon could result in a higher calling. A good example of this is Philip. In Acts 6:1- 6, Philip was appointed a deacon, and he served in the office so well that in chapter 8 he was called to a higher office: he became Philip the Evangelist.

D. Deaconesses

The fourth area to discuss in the organization and leadership of the local church is the question: Did the early church have an order of deaconesses or not? The Greek word, *he diakonos* used to defend this order, could simply mean "servant" without any official capacity. There is a lot of debate about having the office of deaconess because many feel it would violate biblical teaching. Actually, it would violate biblical teaching only if one misunderstands the office of a deacon. In those churches where deacons are in a position of authority, having deaconesses would be a violation of biblical teaching. But biblically, a deacon is a servant, and since there is nothing wrong with female servants, there is nothing biblically wrong with an order of deaconesses, if the office is kept biblically.

There is no clear-cut biblical evidence that there was an order of deaconesses. There may have been an official position of deaconesses in the early church, but if so, they would have been servants, not rulers.

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There are two main passages that are used to defend the office of a deaconess. One passage is Romans 16:1-2, and 12, but these verses may simply mean that the woman was a servant in an unofficial sense. There is no clear evidence here of an official position.

The second passage is I Timothy 3:11, but here it may refer to a wife of a deacon rather than a deaconess, because the Greek word used here is the Greek word for woman or wife, not the Greek word for deaconess. Rather, I Timothy 3:11 lists four qualifications of a deacon's wife: first, she must be dignified; secondly, she must not be slanderous, or a faultfinder, she must not be gossipy; thirdly, she must be temperate, not given to excesses in life; and fourthly, she must be faithful in all things, she must be a reliable woman.

There is no clear New Testament example of an order of deaconesses. But biblically speaking, there may not be anything wrong with having deaconesses if the office is recognized as being one of servants, not rulers.

E. The Responsibility of the Flock

The fifth area showing the organization and leadership of the local church is the five main passages of Scripture that deal with the responsibilities of the flock to their Shepherds.

1. I Corinthians 16:15-16

Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints), that ye also be in subjection unto such, and to every one that helps in the work and labors.

Here, Paul writes that the congregants should be *in subjection* to those who minister to them. Here is a good reason why congregational governments are not the biblical form of government, because the congregation is the authority and the elder or teacher or pastor or minister is in subjection to the congregation. This is the opposite of what Paul writes here; they are to be *in subjection* to the elders who are responsible for ministering unto them.

2. I Thessalonians 5:12-13

But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

The second passage makes two points. First, *to know* those who labor in the Word for the purpose of appreciating their true worth. In other words, get to know the people who are teaching you the Word of God in order to appreciate their true worth. Secondly, *to esteem* them highly in love, to esteem them to be of particular importance, recognizing the importance of those who are responsible for teaching the Word of God.

3. I Timothy 5:17-19

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who

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labor in the word and in teaching. For the scripture say, You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire. Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses.

The third passage makes three points. First, in verse 17, congregants should honor all the elders with a special emphasis on teaching elders. All elders are ruling elders, but only some of the elders are also teaching elders. The congregation must honor all of the elders, but particularly those who are the teaching elders.

The second point, in verses 17-18, states the means of honoring the elders. This *honor* is to be expressed in double material remuneration. It is a clear statement that those who labor in the Word should be able to make their living from it, and the congregants should watch out for the material welfare of their teachers. Furthermore, it claims *double* remuneration. The word *honor* is the Greek word referring to financial or material remuneration. An elder should be given double salary so that he will have no economic needs and can devote all of his time to the teaching of the Word of God.

In verse 19, the third point is that no accusation should be received against an elder without absolute evidence *at the mouth of two or three witnesses*. Because a teaching elder is in the public eye, he may make enemies because of jealousies and things of this nature and might be accused wrongly. Also, Satan is particularly working against those who are teaching the Word of God.

4. I Peter 5:5-6

Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

This passage deals with the responsibility of the flock to their leaders and makes five points. First, the congregants should be in subjection to the elders. They do not rule the elders, as in the congregational form of government, but are in subjection to the elders. Secondly, Peter points out that this is the way that humility is shown; godly humility is shown by being in subjection to the elders. Thirdly, he points out that God will resist them if they are proud. Fourthly, he states: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God*, and in this context, the means by which one humbles himself before the mighty hand of God is by submission to the elders. And fifth, those who will submit to the elders will receive their reward; they will be exalted *in due time.* God will exalt those who will humble themselves by being in subjection to the elders of the church.

5. Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24

This is the fifth main passage that deals with the issue of the congregation's responsibility to the leaders. Verse 7 states: *Remember*

them that had the rule over you, men that spoke unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.
The Greek word for *Remember* means "to observe carefully." Consider carefully the manner of the lives of previous elders for the purpose of imitating their faith. Those who had the rule over them were those who had previously been elders and who had now either gone on elsewhere or had passed away. Those are the ones who previously spoke the Word of God to them, and so they were teaching elders.

Secondly, in verse 17 he states: *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.*
They are now to *submit* to the present elders for the reason that they watch over the congregant's soul, because they will have to *give account.* Some day the elders will have to give an account, but not give an account of how they conducted their eldership; God Himself will give an account of that. Rather, they will have to give an account concerning those who were under their authority, whether they obeyed or disobeyed. Therefore, submit to those who are presently your elders for the reason that they watch over your souls, because they will have to give an account. If the congregants submit, then the elders will be able to give this account *with joy*; the joy here is related to the submission factor, not related to the giving an account factor.

The point of this verse is that the elders will watch with joy because the congregation is willing to receive the oversight from their elders. But if the congregation refuses to be in subjection to the authority of the elders, then they will be grieved. If the elders are grieved because of a lack of subjection, this will be *unprofitable* for the flock. It will be unprofitable for those who rebel against the authority of their elders because they will not be able to avoid the pitfalls he spelled out in verses 8-16, such as being caught up in false doctrine. Indeed, congregants who have rebelled against elders and have not been submissive have, in the course of time, slipped into false doctrine or false super spiritual movements.

The third point is found in verse 24: *Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.*
Again, he is dealing with the present elders, not past elders. They are not only to obey the present elders, they are to salute them, not in the military sense, but by giving them the honor due to them. The Book of Hebrews was written to encourage congregants to submit to their rulers, because the rulers of the churches of Judea were following right doctrine. But the people were getting ready to depart from the elders to return to Judaism because of persecution. The writer is simply writing to support the elders because they were right in this case; they were following sound doctrine.

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These five passages clearly spell out the responsibility of the congregants to the elders of the local church. The emphasis is constantly on having a teachable spirit, humbly subjecting themselves to their authority because the biblical form of government is a plurality of elders.

6. Limitations of Elder Authority

There are cases where subjection to elders is not necessary. There are limitations to the authority of elders. The authority given to elders is in matters dealing with the local church. It is the elders who make decisions concerning which missionaries or mission boards they will support, what is going to be taught in various Sunday School classes, what is going to be the series of messages in the Sunday morning service, how the morning worship service is going to be conducted, when and how communion is going to be served, among other things. However, they have no authority in a believer's personal spiritual life. An elder cannot tell one whom to marry or not to marry, where to work or not to work. The elder's authority ceases outside the local church.

V. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The fifth section in the study of the local church deals with church discipline. This topic will be covered in six parts: the necessity and categories, the procedure, the forms, the practice, the attitudes, and the effects of church discipline.

A. The Necessity and Categories Requiring Discipline

There are several places in Scripture that state the necessity for church discipline as well as the categories that require discipline.

First, difficulties between members of a local church could require church discipline (Mat. 18:15-17).

Secondly, church discipline is necessary to avoid divisions. Paul instructs elders to mark out those causing divisions for the purpose of discipline. If the leadership fails to discipline those causing divisions, then the church is going to face an unnecessary church split (Rom. 16:17-18).

Thirdly, church discipline is necessary for the purity of the church. This provides a category for church discipline: immorality. A person practicing or living in immorality must be disciplined by the local church (I Cor. 5:9-13).

Fourthly, a necessity for church discipline is to bring the offender to repentance. If discipline is not exercised, repentance may never come (II Cor. 2:5-11).

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Fifth, a necessity for church discipline is to avoid disorderly conduct. The category requiring church discipline given by this passage refers to those who refuse to work. They should be disciplined by the church. The church has no responsibility to meet the needs of a member who refuses to work for a living (II Thes. 3:6-15).

Sixth, church discipline is necessary in cases of false teaching. Anyone who has begun to teach falsely and is blaspheming is subject to church discipline (I Tim. 1:8-20).

Seventh, church discipline is necessary to avoid crass sins. Sometimes in the exercise of church discipline, it is necessary to reprove someone in the sight of all, even as Paul had to do with Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 (I Tim. 5:20).

Eighth, church discipline is necessary to avoid the spread of false teachings. If the church lets a false teacher go undisciplined, the false teachings will naturally spread. If the church disciplines the false teacher, then the false teachings will stop one way or another. Either the false teacher repents or he leaves (II Tim. 2:17-18).

Ninth, church discipline is necessary to avoid factious perversions (Titus 3:9-11).

B. The Procedure for Church Discipline: Matthew 18:15-20

And if your brother sin against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone: if he hear you, you have gained your brother. But if he hear you not, take with you one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto you as the Gentile and the publican. Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The procedure given in this passage requires four specific steps. First, there must be a private confrontation by the offended one with the offender. The offended one has the responsibility to approach the offender and show him the problem. If the offender responds, that settles the case right there.

If the offender refuses to respond, then comes the second step where the offended must approach the offender again, but this time with two or three witnesses. According to Galatians 6:1, the two or three witnesses must be men who are spiritually mature. They cannot be new or young believers, and it might be wise that these two men be elders of the local church.

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If the person responds to the admonition of the two or three witnesses the matter ends there, but if he does not then the third stage is to bring it before the entire local church. This point is reemphasized in Romans 16:17; II Corinthians 2:6; and II Thessalonians 3:6-15.

If he still refuses to respond, then comes the critical fourth step, which is excommunication or, as it is put in the Matthew account: *let him be unto you as the Gentile and the publican*, meaning "untouchable." Excommunication means that he is placed outside the local church; he is expelled from the local church. People in the local church are admonished not to fellowship with him, not to ease the pain of excommunication; he is no longer under the protection of the prayers of the saints or the prayers of the local church. Furthermore, according to I Corinthians 5:1-5, he is placed back under Satan's authority for the destruction of the flesh, although the passage goes on to clearly state that his spirit will still be saved.

This is the procedure for church discipline. A local church must follow these four steps. If it does not, then the discipline is not biblical discipline.

C. The Forms of Discipline

The third part of church discipline discusses the three different forms of church discipline. First, there is admonishment and warning (I Thes. 5:12-13). This will come with the second or third step from above.

The second form is exclusion from fellowship, where the offender is excluded from the meeting of the church and members of the local church are asked not to fellowship with him (II Thes. 3:6, 14).

The third form of discipline is excommunication (I Cor. 5:5). Again, excommunication puts the offender, not just outside the local church, but actually puts him into the hands of Satan for the destruction of his physical life. Whereas it is normally God who puts the believer to death, in the case of an excommunicated believer, Satan will put him to death, although Satan has no authority over his spiritual life; he will still be saved.

D. The Practice of Church Discipline

In the fourth part of church discipline, there are two examples of the practice of church discipline in Scripture. One example is in I Corinthians 5:1-5, where discipline is for immorality. A second example is I Timothy 1:18-20, where discipline was for the sin of blasphemy.

E. Attitudes in Church Discipline

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The fifth part of church discipline explores the attitudes that should be held by those exercising church discipline. The Bible speaks of two key attitudes. First, it must be done in meekness (Gal. 6:1). Secondly, it must be done with the spirit of being willing to forgive if the person will finally respond (II Cor. 2:5-11; 7:10-13).

F. The Effects of Church Discipline

And the sixth part of church discipline discusses the question: What should be the effects of church discipline? There are effects on both the individual being disciplined and on the local congregation.

The effects of discipline on the individual, if it is accepted, will be twofold. First, there will be sorrow (II Cor. 2:7) and secondly, there will be shame (II Thes. 3:14).

The effects of discipline on the local congregation will be threefold. First, it will be protected from any further decay (I Cor. 5:5). Secondly, it will feel godly fear (I Tim. 5:20). And thirdly, it will have the attitude that restoration is the goal of discipline. Punishment is not the goal of discipline, rather, the goal of discipline is restoration (II Cor. 2:5-11).

VI. THE SABBATH AND SUNDAY

The sixth section of the study of the local church deals with the issue of the Sabbath and Sunday. This section will be divided into two parts.

A. The Sabbath

The English word "Sabbath" comes from the Hebrew word *shabbat*, and means "to desist," "to cease," "to rest." With the end of the sixth day of Creation, God finished His creative work, and on the seventh day He rested (Gen. 1:2-3). There is no use of the term *shabbat* in the Book of Genesis; the only term used is: *the seventh day.*

With this brief explanation of the Sabbath, the first part will be divided into four units.

1. From Adam to Moses

Between Adam and Moses the Sabbath was not observed. The one major book that was written during the period between Adam and Moses was the Book of Job, and Job does not even mention the Sabbath. Even within the historical Books of Genesis and the first part of Exodus before the time of Moses, there is no record of any of the people keeping the Sabbath. One does not read of anyone's keeping the Sabbath, not Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Joseph. Between Adam and Moses there was no keeping of the Sabbath, because the Sabbath was not a command.

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2. From Moses to Jesus

From Moses until the time of Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, the Sabbath was mandatory. The very first mention of the Sabbath is in conjunction with Moses in Exodus 16:23, 29-30. That is the first mention of anyone's observing the Sabbath. The Sabbath was mentioned as the seventh day of Creation, but there was no record of anyone's observing the Sabbath. It was not a creation ordinance. In Exodus 20:10-11 keeping the Sabbath became one of the Ten Commandments. Nehemiah 9:14 also points out the fact that the Sabbath began with Moses.

The second thing to note about the Sabbath between Moses and Yeshua is that the Sabbath was obligatory for Jews, but not obligatory for Gentiles. That should be kept in mind in relationship to the claims from Seventh Day Adventists. Exodus 31:12-17 states that the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel. But Seventh Day Adventists are not part of the people of Israel, and so the Sabbath does not apply to them. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 5:15, the Sabbath was a sign of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. God never brought the Seventh Day Adventist Church out of the land of Egypt as He brought out Israel. Even the prophets emphasized the same point. They never make Sabbath observance obligatory for all humanity, only upon Israel. Ezekiel 20:12 and 20 reemphasized the fact the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel.

A third thing to note about the Sabbath between Moses and Jesus is that there was a prophecy about a future cessation of Sabbath observance in Hosea 2:11.

3. The Present Age

The third unit dealing with the Sabbath answers the question: What about the Sabbath in this present age? Two things should be noted. First, Sabbath observance was never transferred to Sunday; the Sabbath is still the seventh day of the week, not the first day of the week. The Sabbath is still from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday.

Secondly, it is no longer mandatory to observe the Sabbath in the present age. The Sabbath day is mentioned nine times in the Book of Acts, but it is never mentioned in connection with the worship of believers. In every case that the Sabbath is mentioned in the Book of Acts, it speaks of a synagogue observance on the Sabbath day, not observance by believers.

Seventh Day Adventists who use Paul's actions of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day should be reminded that the synagogue worship is not the church service. If they really want to follow Paul's example, they should not go to their own churches on

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Saturday, but go to synagogue on Saturday.
Again, the nine times that the Sabbath is mentioned in the Book of Acts, it is always in connection with a synagogue observance of the Mosaic Law, but never in connection with the worship of believers that now constitute the Body of the Messiah.

In the Epistles, the Sabbath is mentioned in Romans 14:5, Galatians 4:9-10, and Colossians 2:16-17. In none of these passages is the believer obligated to worship on the Sabbath. For example, Romans 14:5 states: *One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind.*
According to this verse, in this day and age there is no special day of the week that must be set aside, for one man may esteem one day as special and another man may esteem every day alike, but each man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind. Whichever way a person chooses, he is free to choose. He is free to set a day of the week aside, and he is free not to set a day of the week aside. Either way it is fine with the Lord.

Another passage, Galatians 4:9-10, states: *but now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years.*
Paul admonished the Gentile believers of Galatia not to get caught up with the things of the Mosaic Law. They should not be concerned about the observances of certain things. He mentions *days*, which are Sabbath days; *months*, which would be new moon festivals; *seasons*, such as the Passover; and *years*, such as the Sabbatical Year. Paul said these things are not intended for the new entity, the Church.

One last passage is Colossians 2:16-17: *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's.*
Paul said to let no man judge a believer concerning the things of the Mosaic Law. One of these things is Sabbath days. So if one does not observe the Sabbath and a Seventh Day Adventist comes to condemn him, according to this verse, he is clearly out of line.

The point of these verses is that during the present age, Saturday is still the Sabbath, for it was never transferred to Sunday, but there is no command to keep the Sabbath; the Sabbath is no longer mandatory.

4. The Messianic Kingdom

The fourth unit on the Sabbath discusses the role it will have when the Kingdom is established: the Sabbath will once again be a day of mandatory rest (Is. 66:23; Ezek. 46:1).

B. Sunday

The second part of this section deals with the issue of Sunday in three

areas: its name, its observance, and the fact that there is no commandment regarding Sunday observance.

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1. The Name

The English term "Sunday" actually originates from a pagan name for this first day of the week. The term "Sunday" is never used in the Bible for this particular day. Biblically, it is never called "Sunday," nor is it ever called "the Sabbath," and it is never called "the Lord's Day." Although this is a very common term that some believers use for this day, the Bible never calls Sunday "the Lord's Day." The one name given in the Bible is always *the first day of the week*. This is in keeping with the Hebrew names for the days of the week. In Hebrew, the first day of the week is called just that: the first day of the week; that is the only New Testament name used for this day.

2. The Observance

The second area in the issue of Sunday is that the believer's observance on Sunday as the time of gathering was based on certain happenings on that day. In the New Testament, there are six events that happened on the first day of the week.

First, of course, was the Resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah. The Messiah was resurrected on the first day of the week, and that point is made by all four Gospels (Mat. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). The second event that happened on the first day of the week was that Yeshua appeared to ten of His disciples on this day (Jn. 20:19).

A third event happened exactly one week later, also on the first day of the week, and that was the appearance to the eleven disciples with Thomas included, whereas he was excluded previously (Jn. 20:26).

The fourth event that happened on the first day of the week was the birthday of the Church. This can be surmised by comparing what is stated in Acts 2:1-4 with Leviticus 23:15-16. By comparing these two passages, it seems evident that the Holy Spirit's arrival on the Church was on the first day of the week.

The fifth event that happened on this day is that the church gathered in Troas on the first day of the week. It was already a very early practice for believers to gather on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

And the sixth event that happened on the first day of the week was that this was the time that the offering was to be set aside (I Cor. 16:2). Throughout history, therefore, the reason that believers have chosen Sunday as the day of the weekly observance is because of these six events which happened on this day. A very common misconception is the teaching that Sunday observance began with the Roman Catholic Church. This is not true. First day observance began with the Jewish believers in the first century.

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The reason was very simple: it was customary for Jewish believers to continue worshipping with unbelieving Jews in their regular worship at the synagogue on the Sabbath day, Saturday. For example, the apostles went to the Temple to worship on the Sabbath day and the early Jewish believers went with other Jews to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Many times in the Book of Acts Paul, Barnabas, and Silas, among others, would attend a synagogue service on the Sabbath day. Since the early believers were all Jews, they continued meeting with other Jews in the synagogue or in the Temple on the Sabbath day. But being believers, they also wished to meet among themselves exclusively as believers, so they chose the next day, which was the first day of the week. They did not necessarily do it on what is called "Sunday morning," because they had to go to work on Sunday morning. The Jewish Sabbath is from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday and the first day of the week begins at sundown Saturday, not at midnight Saturday. On Saturday evening at sundown, it was already the first day of the week, and the Jewish believers would gather together. It was not the Roman Catholic Church that began Sunday observance, but the Jewish believers. They did not meet Sunday morning, they met on Saturday night.

There is a story in the Jewish Talmud of a rabbinical discussion concerning the issue of why Jews do not fast on the first day of the week. The quotation goes something like this:
"We do not fast on the Sabbath day because it is a Sabbath day, nor do we fast on the day before the Sabbath in order to honor the Sabbath. Why do we not fast on the day after the Sabbath? Because of the Nazarenes."

The term "Nazarene" was the early rabbinic term for Jews who believed in the Messiahship of Yeshua. One can find the Jewish leaders calling the Jewish believers "Nazarenes" as early as the Book of Acts. The reason the rabbis tried to tell Jewish people not to fast on Sunday was to avoid showing any honor to the day that the Jewish believers considered sacred, which was the first day of the week.

From both biblical sources and Jewish sources of the period, the start of worship on the first day of the week did not begin with the Roman Catholic Church, but with the Jewish believers.

3. No Command Regarding Sunday Observance

The third area to point out about Sunday is that the observance of Sunday is not a command. There is no command to observe Sunday. The command given in Scripture is that believers are to gather together (Heb. 10:25-26). The day that the individual local congregation may choose is totally up to that local church. If the local church has chosen to gather together on Sunday, that is perfectly all right. But if the local church someday decides to meet only on

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Tuesdays, that would also be biblically all right, as there is no mandatory Sunday observance. It is mandatory to gather, but each local church has the freedom to choose on which day of the week it will do so.

In Israel, churches meet on Saturday, not because they feel they have to observe the Sabbath, but because Sunday is another work day for the Israeli believer, and he has to make a living. The evangelical fundamental churches in Israel that are indigenous meet on the seventh day, on Saturday. In Moslem countries, the churches meet on Fridays because that is the day off for one who lives in a Moslem country. All of these things are perfectly legitimate within the context of what the Bible allows.

VII. THE MEETING OF THE CHURCH

The seventh section of the study of the local church answers the question: How do we define the meeting of the church? Many of the regulations on how the church meeting is to be conducted apply to the meeting of the church

From various passages in the New Testament, it is evident that there were five elements in the meeting of a church. The first element was the exercise of spiritual gifts (I Cor. 14:26). The second element was the practice of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 14:26). The third element was the laying aside of the offering (I Cor. 16:1-2). Fourthly, there were prayers to be conducted (I Tim. 2:1-2). And fifth, there was the giving of testimonies and missionary reports (Acts 14:27). Yet not a single one of these can be used to define the meeting of the church.

There is one common element, and that is based upon the root meaning of the Greek word for "church," *kaleo*, meaning "to call out." The best way to define the meeting of the church is that it is a called out meeting by the elders, who have the authority to do so. Their presence is necessary for the meeting to be conducted. Any meeting officially called by the elders for any purpose is the meeting of the church. The purpose might be worship, it might be a business meeting or some other reason, but any time the elders of the church call a meeting, their presence is required for the meeting to be conducted, and that is the meeting of the church. It is then that the various rules of proper actions and proper decorum concerning the local church apply; they do not apply by just entering a building where the church meets; they apply only if the meeting itself was called out by the elders.

VIII. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

The eighth section discusses the role of women in the local church.

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This is a highly debated issue today, not because the Bible is unclear, but because democracy has tried to infest itself into the local church and modern concepts concerning the role of women in society, which are not necessarily biblical, have often been applied to the Church. Therefore, it is important that what the role of women in the local church is clearly expounded upon. This issue will be discussed in four principles.

A. The Principle of Subjection

Three key passages of Scripture deal with the principle of subjection. The first passage is Ephesians 5:22-24: *Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything.*
The point of this passage is that a wife should *be in subjection* to her husband, *as unto the Lord*. Her submission to her husband *in everything* is a sign of her submission to the Lord. A wife who is not in subjection to her husband cannot in any way claim to be in subjection to the Lord.

The second passage is Titus 2:5: *to be sober minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*
This verse points out that a wife should be in subjection to her husband; if she is not, then the Word of God is blasphemed.

The third passage is I Peter 3:1-6: *In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror.*
This passage makes three main points. First, in verses 1-2, a wife should be in subjection to her husband even if her husband is an unbeliever. Having an unbelieving husband in no way frees the wife from being in subjection to him

Secondly, in verses 3-4, the subject of adornment is emphasized. There is nothing wrong with outward adornment, but in these verses, it is pointed out that the primary emphasis of a wife should be on inward adornment, not on the outward, with the inward taking a secondary role. Inward adornment is the development of *a meek and quiet spirit.*

Thirdly, it is pointed out in verses 5-6 that this is the way *the holy women*

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of the Old Testament conducted themselves, and they should be the examples of wives today.

Therefore, the first principle concerning the role of women is the principle of subjection. In all of these cases, the subjection was specifically of the wife to the husband, and that becomes the foundation of this principle which underlies the role of women in the local church.

B. The Principle of Silence

The second principle concerning the role of women is the principle of silence. This principle is found in I Corinthians 14:33b-35: *As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also said the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.*

People have used all kinds of exegetical gymnastics to try to get around the obvious meaning of this text, but what Paul states is very easy to understand. Four points should be noted.

First, in verse 33b, what he is about to say is the custom of all churches and is a principle to be followed by all the churches, not merely by some.

Secondly, in verse 34a, he points to his apostolic authority. By apostolic authority women are to be silent in the meeting of the church. Again, the meeting of the church is any meeting called by the elders and requires their presence regardless of the purpose of the meeting.

Thirdly, in verse 34b, he points out that this principle is also taught in the Old Testament; it is not purely a New Testament teaching.

Fourthly, in verse 35, lest someone conclude from the context that this verse only means that a woman is not allowed to speak in tongues in the church, he states that this commandment of silence applies even to the point of asking questions. In essence, a woman is to keep silent in the meeting of the church to the point that she is not even allowed to ask questions. This would not apply, of course, to singing, because in the context, he does differentiate speaking from singing. But as far as speaking is concerned, the principle is one of silence.

C. The Principle of Teaching

The third principle concerning the role of women in the local church is the principle of teaching. There are two passages that deal with this principle.

1. I Timothy 2:11-14

Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled has

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fallen into transgression.

The first passage concerning the issue of teaching states that women are not allowed to teach Scriptures to men. In this passage Paul makes three main points. First, in verse 11, a woman is to *learn in quietness with all subjection.*

Then secondly, in verse 12, he applies the principle of subjection to the principle of teaching: women are not permitted to teach men. If women do teach Scriptures to men, then they are not in subjection to God. The reason for this is that the act of teaching is the exercise of authority. The teaching here is not teaching secular subjects, but it is the teaching of Scripture. This verse does not forbid a woman to teach men the sciences or mathematics or the humanities. But insofar as Scripture is concerned, it is forbidden. A teacher of Scripture is exercising spiritual authority. This is not allowed for a woman, so she is prohibited from teaching Scriptures to men.

Thirdly, this prohibition extends only to the teaching of men; it is not forbidden for women to teach other women or to teach children. In verses 13-14, he points out the reasons for it. In verse 13 the chain of command is stated in order to point out that the woman is to show subjection by not teaching Scriptures to men. According to verse 14, women by nature tend to be more susceptible to false doctrine than men. This verse harks back to the story of Eve, where woman's priority in the transgression led to her subordinate role in the Church. In Genesis 3, the woman usurped authority over her husband and took the lead in the Fall, and is now forbidden to do so in the local church by teaching Scriptures to men.

2. Titus 2:3-5

that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

Titus makes two main points concerning a woman's role in teaching. First, a woman may teach other women. God does give the gift of teaching to women, and so older women in the faith should teach the younger women. And secondly, women may also teach children. But they may not teach adult men.

D. The Principle of the Headcovering

The fourth principle is found in I Corinthians 11:2-16. This passage will be expounded upon verse by verse and it will be seen that Paul is not unclear here. The problem is that people simply do not want to obey this passage and want to hide behind the facade of twentieth century culture, although they blame it on first century culture. This passage can be divided into five parts.

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1. God Given Traditions: I Corinthians 11:2

Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you.

In this verse Paul emphasizes the necessity of holding to God given traditions in the local church. Paul does not set aside the topic of headcovering he is about to discuss as something trivial. It is an important enough question to answer. He will answer it by spending fifteen verses on it; therefore, one should sit up and take note of what he is saying because there is a right way and a wrong way of worshipping God.

The point that he is making is that the issue is not a matter of taste, nor is it a matter of national custom, but rather, Christian practice must conform to Christian doctrine. The practice of headcovering will conform to specific doctrines. He points out in this verse that it is the duty of every local church to stay faithful to apostolic teaching. The word *traditions* here is not used in the sense of a church tradition, but in the sense of a command given by apostolic authority. The apostles had the right to bind and to loose concerning commandments, and here is a commandment Paul is going to give by apostolic authority for the church. Like the other commandments that he wrote, this one needs to be obeyed.

2. The Principle of Headship: I Corinthians 11:3

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

When Paul deals with the principle of headship, he spells out the chain of command, and there are three links in this chain of command. The first link is God the Father's headship over God the Son, Yeshua the Messiah. The second link is the Messiah's headship over the man. And the third link is man's headship over the woman. The first principle of the role of women in the local church was the principle of subjection to man's headship over the woman.

Concerning the principle of headship, there are two ramifications. First, this has nothing to do with inferiority or superiority. This verse does not intend to teach, nor does any passage teach, the inferiority of woman to man any more than the Messiah is inferior to the Father. Subjection is not an issue of inferiority or superiority. The Bible makes it very clear that the Father and Son are coequal, and yet the Son is in subjection to the Father. The man and the woman are coequal, but one is to be in subjection to the other.

The second ramification is that the word *man* in the Greek text has a definite article while the Greek word for *woman* does not. Therefore, it

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shows a functional relationship, a functional subordination. There is the subjection of femaleness to maleness.

This is the theological truth upon which the tradition is based, the theological foundation upon which the practice is based.

3. The Application of the Doctrine: I Corinthians 11:4-6

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonors her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled.

The application of this doctrine is first to the man and then to the woman. In verse 4, the application to the man is that, in the meeting of the church, his head is to remain uncovered when he is *praying or prophesying*. Praying and prophesying are things that go on in the public meeting, not in private. In the public exercise of *praying or prophesying*, the male head should not be covered. If his head is covered, he disgraces his head; he dishonors his own head. He also dishonors Jesus as his spiritual head. The application to the man is: his head is to be uncovered.

In verses 5-6, the application is to the woman. It begins with a command in verse 5. The command is that *every woman* should have her head covered. The way the Greek reads, *every woman* may mean all women in general if the word "women" of verse 3 is used generically meaning "femaleness" as over against "maleness." But it may mean "every married woman," since that same word could mean either "female" or "a married woman."

I take this verse to apply only to married women because it is married women who are to be in subjection to their husbands, not single women, and they are to show this subjection by wearing a headcovering. So I would say that the command applies not to all believing women in general, but specifically to married women.

The command is that the woman is to have her head covered. The Greek word for *unveiled* used in this verse is a word that is used of an article of clothing. "To cover" means "to put on an article of clothing" and "to uncover" means "to put off an article of clothing." A woman, in contrast to the man, should have her head covered in the meeting of the church where praying and prophesying are going on.

Concerning the expression *praying or prophesying*, some believe that this simply means that only if a woman is praying aloud and only if she is prophesying aloud is she to wear the headcovering, but that is not the point here. The two words *praying* and *prophesying* are representative of all that goes on in the meeting of the church. They are representative

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of the total participation in the assembly. Later, in I Corinthians 14:33-35, Paul points out that the biblical standard for women in the meeting of the church is that of silence. This passage is not dealing with one's ministry in the church. Paul deals with that in chapters 12-14. This chapter deals with one's position in the meeting of the church.

The expression *praying or prophesying* is actually a figure of speech for the sum total of the church meeting, from that which is least, praying, which everyone can do, to that which is greatest, *prophesying*, which only a few can do. In *praying*, one speaks to God (I Cor. 14:14-15); in *prophesying*, one speaks to man (I Cor. 14:3-5, 22, 24, 31). This is the least and the most that goes on within the confines of the meeting of the church, and both statements are limited to men in the worship of the church. For example, public praying is limited to men in I Timothy 2:8, 10-11 and prophesying is limited to men in I Corinthians 14:33-35. Paul is using *praying or prophesying* as a sum total of all that goes on in a meeting of the church.

At this point Paul is only dealing with the headcovering; he intends to deal with women speaking later in chapter 14, where he forbids it. Therefore, he points out that the uncovered head is a disgrace to the woman because she dishonors her own head, and she also dishonors the man, her figurative head. An uncovered head identifies her with those who are shaved: the adulterous wife, the unwed mother, and the priestesses of the phallic cult. While she herself may not be shaved, if she has her head uncovered, she is identified with such women of ill repute who are shaved, and that is one reason why she should have her head covered.

In verse 6, he draws an analogy. The analogy is that if a woman does not cover her head, then let her also be shaved. If one is going to disregard the covering imposed by headship, then she should throw off that which is imposed by nature, her hair. This is one passage that shows that the hair and the headcovering are not the same thing. If it is disgraceful for a woman to have her head shaved, let her also be covered.

4. The Defense of the Doctrine: I Corinthians 11:7-15

The fourth part of this passage is a defense of this doctrine. Paul defends this doctrine with two main evidences.

a. From Creation: I Corinthians 11:7-12

For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

This verse speaks about the reflection of glory in that the man reflects God's image and glory, and man is like God in headship and authority. His uncovered head gives the visible expression of that invisible truth. A woman reflects the glory of the man. She is to reflect man's

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subordination to God, and by covering her head she does not detract from and does not compete with man's glory.
Part of the woman's beauty is her longer hair, and because the man is to have the honor and the woman is to be in subjection in the meeting of the church, her uncovered head is not to detract from the glory that belongs to the man. For that reason she is obligated by this passage to put an article of clothing over that part of her head from where her hair grows. In this way, that which adds to her beauty, her hair, will not detract from male headship.

Paul points to the order of Creation in verse 8: *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.*
The origin of the male was independent of the woman in that the man was created out of the dust of the ground. The female's origin was dependent on the man, because she was made out of his rib; without him she could not have come into being.

Paul states the purpose of the woman in verse 9: *for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.*
The male was not created to serve the woman, but the woman was created to be a helpmate for the man (Gen. 2).

Paul draws the conclusion to what he has just said in verse 10a: *for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head.*
Therefore, because of the theological truth he has just stated, a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head. Notice that he does not give a single cultural reason for the headcovering. Every reason is a theological one, and if the theological reasons are still true, and they are, then the practice is still a command. Therefore, a woman should have *a sign of authority on her head*. This *sign of authority* is an article of clothing as a headcovering. It does not have to be a hat, but some article of clothing. The headcovering is to serve as a visible sign of the theological truth.

Paul proceeds to give yet another reason why a woman should have her head covered in verse 10b: *because of the angels.*
One of the functions of the good angels is to observe believers. For example, in Luke 15:10, angels observe when a person is saved. In I Corinthians 4:9, angels observe the believers' struggles in the world. In Ephesians 3:10, angels observe God's plan and program, and from it they learn God's wisdom through His plan for the Church. In I Timothy 5:21, there is the command to obey the laws of God made in the presence of angels. Angels observe whether man will keep those commandments. Isaiah 6:1-2 points out that the angels covered themselves in the presence of God; should woman do any less than the angels do in obeying God? The point is that the good angels observe whether women are obeying this command, and that is another reason why a wife should have her head covered.

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Paul teaches the lesson of interdependence in verses 11 and 12: *Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.*

The purpose of the lesson of interdependence is to protect a woman from possible abuse from the man because he is the head. The point is that a man cannot use his headship as a point of arrogance to demean the woman. While in Creation, a woman was not independent of the man, but man was independent of woman, yet in time, man is not independent of the woman. While a woman's existence is dependent upon man's prior existence because of the rib, yet man's continuous existence is dependent upon the woman because of being born of a woman by childbirth. This is a lesson of interdependence. Just because God has given the authority of headship to the male, this does not give the man any reason to demean or abuse the woman.

b. From Nature: I Corinthians 11:13-15

Paul moves into a second category of evidences in defending the doctrine of the headcovering, and that is evidences from nature. Paul teaches a lesson from the standpoint of propriety in verse 13: *Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled?*

The word "proper" means "that which is fitting" or "that which is right." The word "to judge" is not from personal opinion or bias, but from the divine norm, the divine standard. The propriety question is based upon the theological truth which was presented earlier. Paul asks, "Is it proper for a man to have long hair?" The obvious answer is, "no."

Having said this, he deals with the issue of long hair in verses 14-15: *Does not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

First, in verse 14, he points out that *nature itself* teaches that a woman's hair is longer than the man's and this is a universal custom. One can travel anywhere in the world and, with rare exception, the one custom that seems to be common to all is that the woman's hair is always longer than the man's hair. Biblically, Paul states, there should be an objective difference between man and woman shown by the length of hair. If a man has long hair, it *is a dishonor to him* and to God, because by having long hair, he is usurping the glory of the woman. A man should have his hair shorter than a woman.

In verse 15, Paul turns to the woman and points out that her hair is her *glory*. Her long hair is an adornment basic to her glamour or beauty. Her long hair enhances her femininity. Her long hair is her covering. Some use this verse to say that the headcovering Paul has been dealing with is her hair. So as long as a woman has long hair, she is fulfilling the demands of the entire text.

This is incorrect, for this is not the same word that was used before. It is the same word in English, but not the same word in Greek. What is pointed out is that her long hair is her *covering* and the word for *hair* gives the reason why her hair promotes her glory. It is given to her as a permanent endowment. It is given to her, not in place of a headcovering, but the Greek word means "corresponding to a headcovering," the two go together.

Whereas the Greek word for the hair is a permanent covering, the earlier word for "covering" was a temporary covering, such as an article of clothing. What Paul is saying is this: Since a woman's longer hair is her glory, it should be covered in the meeting of the church so as not to detract from the glory of her husband. Her hair is not the headcovering he was speaking of earlier; otherwise the men, in order to have their heads uncovered, would have to shave their heads. Paul is not simply saying to a woman, "Woman, keep you hair on your head." It is naturally there anyway, and he would not need to leave such a commandment. If the headcovering were merely the hair, what about the man who must have his head uncovered? Logically, that would mean that before going to church the man would need to have his head shaved. That is not the point here. The woman's hair is a permanent covering which is her glory, but that glory should be covered by an article of clothing in the meeting of the church.

5. Conclusion: I Corinthians 11:16

But if any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

This verse is a concluding statement, a note to the contentious. Paul states that if there are some who would debate the issue, there is no other practice. The word we refers to the apostles who brought these commandments by apostolic authority. The practice mentioned is the practice of the headcovering. He points out that there is no other practice besides the headcovering, and to debate this is to debate apostolic authority. Not only does Paul practice this, but *the churches of God* follow the same procedure. This is the practice of all the other local churches and differences of culture are not relevant to the issue, since the issue is based upon theology, not culture. In other words, the practice was not to be unique to Corinth, it was followed by all the other churches as well.

Even though it might be a hard biblical rule to follow today, the rule is that during the meeting of the church, any meeting called out by the elders that requires their presence, a woman should have her head covered. By doing so, she might be a minority, but she is following the Word of the Lord.✡

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IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS097, 108, 109 and 112.