

The Principle of Shared Leadership

“It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables” (Acts 6:2).

Acts 6 is a great place to begin a discussion of church government. When we understand church government, we will understand the channel of church authority and the role each person plays in leadership. Special emphasis in this lesson will be on the Deacon and his role in shared Church leadership.

Before going further, it is to be understood that the method God has chosen to govern His church is called “Theocracy.”

⇒ Theo - God Cracy - rules

Theocracy means God rules. God has always wanted to rule in the hearts of men. He has always chosen leaders, but he also remained the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords over His people. Those whom He has chosen are expected to live in strict accordance and obedience to the Word of God and voice of the Spirit. If this is not done then leadership has failed in their office. Man cannot rule God’s Kingdom any way he pleases.

Everyone in God’s kingdom is subject to a higher power (Romans 13:1).

In the Church we do not believe in dictatorship; one man rules the church. Neither do we believe in a system of communism; elders rule together. In the Church there is not a system of monarchy; rule is done through inheritance (passed down from generation to generation). The Church is not like politics where democracy works; congregation rules the church.

The method God chose to rule His Church was established through Moses. He is the Old Testament example of the way God wanted to set up church authority.

One day Korah said, “Moses, you take too much upon yourself!” (Numbers 16:3). Look at the result found in Numbers 16:28-33.

A second story is found in Numbers 12 when Miriam, the sister of Moses said, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?” (Numbers 12:2). As a result she became leprous. This is a type of sin in the Old Testament.

David gave excellent advice in Psalm 105:15. He was a man after God’s heart. On two occasions he could have killed Saul (1 Samuel 26:8-9).

The Pastor is God’s leader in the Church. He should seek the counsel of God’s people, not being abusive or insulting. He should always show respect and love for his flock. He should seek advice from his councilors (local church board) and be prayerful in making decisions in the church. It was never intended by God that the pastor do all the work in the church. The Early Church realized this when they started to be involved in waiting on tables. The answer was found in appointing deacons to take care of these needs. Moses also experienced this problem and was given a command to appoint elders to assist him. Deacons are responsible for the practical, non-spiritual church functions. Under the supervision and authority of the pastor they can be used to perform both spiritual and non-spiritual duties in the church.

There was a twofold purpose of appointing deacons in the Early Church. The main purpose was to allow the pastor to continue in prayer and ministry of the Word.

Leadership

The second purpose was to give authority to capable men who could handle matters in the church.

Deacons are men who share the burden and vision of the pastor for the work of the Lord.

Moses was told to appoint men who would share in the burden he felt. He was burdened with the needs of the people. Numbers 11:16-17 says, "They will help you carry the burden so that you will not have to carry it alone." Jethro, Moses's father-in-law also gave him similar advice in Exodus 18:17-23. A deacon can be appointed/ elected to cover any area of need in the church (whether it is spiritual or practical). In some countries deacons would be called Department Heads, Coordinators, and Directors.

A pastor must train leaders for the church to grow. He cannot and should not be everything.

The deacons are also in place to provide counsel. Before the pastor acts in business matters he would be wise to seek the counsel of the deacons (Proverbs 1:5; 15:22; 20:18). They should also help in discipline of members. Joint action spreads the responsibility and lessens the reactions. The deacon should help in harmony and unity. A deacon can stop gossip, straighten out misunderstandings, explain why certain actions have taken place, and keep general harmony. Hand in hand; pastors and deacons can share leadership to advance the Kingdom of God.

Study Questions

1. What type of church government does God have? What does this mean? _____

2. How should those chosen by God conduct themselves? _____

3. What does Romans 13:1 tell us about everyone in God's Kingdom? _____

4. Who is the Old Testament example of the way God wanted to set up authority in the Church? _____

5. Who are two examples of people who overstepped their authority? _____

6. What was the excellent advice King David gave when it comes to dealing with the anointed? _____

7. What was the twofold purpose of appointing deacons? _____

8. What is meant by the principle of shared leadership (as illustrated by Moses)? _____

9. What must happen in order for the church to grow? _____

10. What is the role of the pastor and deacons when it comes to counsel? _____

11. What are some of the roles (work) of a deacon as outlined in this lesson? _____