

BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE 2000

Article VI – The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT THE CHURCH?

- What do you think about when you hear someone talk about “the church?”

1) The Foundation of the Church

The article states that a New Testament church is a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation and reason for our gathering together. He instituted the church, and it is only because of him that we come together. We have a common confession that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Matthew 16:13-19

*[13] Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” [14] And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” [15] He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” [16] **Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** [17] And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. [18] **And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. [19] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”***

Ephesians 2:17-22

[17] And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. [18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. [19] So then you

*are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21]** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

2) Characteristics of the Church

The article says, “A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.” Lets look at each one of these characteristics a bit more in depth.

A) Autonomy

Most of the time, when the New Testament talks about the church (90%), it is talking about either specific local churches, or local churches in general. It talks about a gathering of Christians who know one another, love one another, and come together under the leadership of specific elders. It only speaks of the “C” church, the church universal, about 10% of the time. This is important, because the New Testament assumes that Christians will be gathered together with other Christians who they are in real community with. More than that, these churches must carry out the commands of the church – spread the gospel and love one another. They are responsible for themselves.

Philippians 1:1-2

[1] Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:1-7

[1] Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, [2] which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, [3] concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh [4] and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, [5] through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, [6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

[7] To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

[1] Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

[2] To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: [3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 2-3

- Do you think this is important for our church? Why?
- How does this play out in other denominations?

B) Jesus' Lordship

As we stated before, we are based upon Jesus. He is our foundation, the reason that we gather together. More than that, we are under his lordship. Jesus is the one who sets the direction, he is the one who organizes the church, and he is the one who calls the shots. As a church, we must submit to his lordship as revealed in his word. We are not our own, but we, as a church, are his.

Ephesians 1:15-23

*[15] For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, [16] I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [22] **And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.***

Ephesians 5:22-32

*[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even **as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.** [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

*[25] Husbands, love your wives, **as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.** [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.***

Colossians 1:15-20

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before

*all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] **And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.** [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

- How does the Lordship of Jesus affect us personally? Corporately?
 - Personally we submit to him by pursuing holiness, by prioritizing our lives according to his word, by obeying his commands.
 - Corporately we organize our church according to his word, we seek to faithfully carry out his direction, partake of the sacraments together, and love one another.

C) Congregational

There are several forms of church polity. We organize as a congregational church.

- Why do we do this?

Other forms of polity: Papal system (Rome), Episcopalian (bishops are the successors of the apostles, are above elders of churches), Presbyterianism (elders are divided between ruling and teaching, board of elders governs over groups of local churches), Congregational, and Quaker (human authority with each individual).

Matthew 18:15-20

*[15] "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. [16] But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17] If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.** [18] Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. [19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. [2] And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

*[3] For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. [4] **When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,** [5] **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.***

Galatians 6:1-2

*[1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, **you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.** Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. [2] Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

More than this, in Acts 6 the Jerusalem congregation itself was charged with calling out the proto-deacons. In Acts 13 we see Paul and Barnabas set aside by the congregation through the leading of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 15 both the apostles along "with the whole church" select who they are going to send as messengers to Antioch. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul outlines the manner in which the congregation should rebuke an elder that is fallen into sin. Congregationalism is not our polity because we are Americans who like to vote. We are congregational because it is Biblical.

- What benefits do you see in congregationalism?
- What are things we need to be careful of?
 - Regenerate church membership is a necessity.
 - Balance between holding elders accountable and submitting to their leadership.
 - Factions within a church

D) Covenant Membership

You will not find a verse in the Bible that describes a church covenant. There is no edict that describes a membership process. There is no example for us to copy, and we do not see anyone signing a piece of paper promising to fulfill vows when they enter a New Testament church. However, the concept of covenant membership is pervasive throughout the Bible, and is very much a part of what we see in the church in scripture. The New Testament describes a church where members are accountable to one another, where they willingly submit to the elders of the church, and where they are unified together as a body. The idea of church discipline does not make sense without church membership. The idea of specific local churches does not make sense without membership. The "one another" commands do not make sense if there is nothing binding those Christians together. Similar to the word "trinity", we do not find the word "covenant membership" in the Bible, but that doesn't mean that it is not there.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

*[12] **For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.** [13] For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

*[14] **For the body does not consist of one member but of many.** [15] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [16] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? [18] But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as*

he chose. [19] *If all were a single member, where would the body be? [20] **As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.***

[21] *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."* [22] *On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not require. **But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.***

- At Crossway we do not have non-members serve in ministry roles. This is not the case at all churches. Why do we do this? Do you think it is important?
- As members, what responsibilities do you have?

E) Baptized Believers

As Baptists, we believe that only individuals who have gone through believer's baptism are eligible for church membership. We will cover baptism more thoroughly next week, but this is a non-negotiable for Baptists. We believe that the Bible teaches us to repent of our sin, turn to Christ in faith. We should be a church of true believers, of people who have a credible confession of faith. We are to be sanctified and sincere. And our entrance into the Church is then through this ordinance of baptism. This is the model and example that we see in all of the New Testament.

Acts 2:41-47

[41] ***So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.***

1 Corinthians 3:10-17

[10] *According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. [11] For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12] Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— [13] each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. [14] If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. [15] If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

[16] ***Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*** [17] *If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

Revelation 21:1-4

[1] *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [2] **And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*** [3] *And I*

heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. [4] He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

3) Ministry of the Church

The article says the church is "observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth." Unpacking this we see the three things that have been known historically as the three marks of a true church.

A) Preaching the Word

This is our primary responsibility as a church. We are to preach the Word of God. He has instructed us to make disciples, teaching them all the things of Christ. We do this by opening up his word and faithfully preaching this, both locally here in our assembly, to our neighbor across the street, and to others around the world.

Acts 2:42-47

*[42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed were together and had all things in common. [45] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] **And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,** [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 13:1-3

*[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**" [3] **Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.***

Acts 14:19-28

*[19] But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. [20] But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. [21] When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, [22] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. [23] **And when they had appointed elders***

for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

[24] Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. [25] And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, [26] and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. [27] **And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.** [28] And they remained no little time with the disciples.

Ephesians 3:7-13

[7] Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. [8] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9] and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, [10] **so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.** [11] This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, [12] in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. [13] So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

- How important should preaching be to our congregation? Why?
- What do you consider good preaching?

B) Observing the Ordinances

There are two ordinances that the New Testament church is called to observe – the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Again, we will discuss both of these in greater detail next week.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

Acts 2:37-41

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] And Peter said to them, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins,** and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." [40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

- Why is it important that we take the Lord's Supper together as a local church?
- Why is it important that we experience baptism together as a local church?

C) Disciplining its Members

The Bible is very specific about the process that should happen when a member is caught in sin. The church is to discipline the offending party together, unified, and this should always be done out of love with the intention to bring the member back to good standing with church and with the Lord.

Matthew 18:15-20

*[15] "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. [16] But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17] If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.** [18] Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. [19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. [2] And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

*[3] For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. [4] **When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus,** [5] **you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.***

- Why do you think this is difficult for most churches?
- Why is this important?

4) Structure of the Church

The article says, "In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." The church structure we find in the New Testament is very simple. It consists of two offices.

A) Pastors

Pastors, Elders, Overseers, or Shepherds are all names used to describe the same office. This a man who is set aside by the congregation as a teacher, leader, and caregiver for the people of the church. The primary job of this individual is to preach and teach the word of God, and to pray for and care for the members of the church. He is to be a man of high character as described in the epistles.

Acts 20:17-38

[17] Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. [18] And when they came to him, he said to them:

*"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, [19] serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; [20] how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, [21] testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. [22] And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, [23] except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. [24] But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. [25] And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. [26] Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, [27] for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. [28] **Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.** [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. [31] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. [32] And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. [33] I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. [34] You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. [35] In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

[36] And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. [37] And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, [38] being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

1 Corinthians 9:1-14

[1] Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? [2] If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

[3] This is my defense to those who would examine me. [4] Do we not have the right to eat and drink? [5] Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? [6] Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? [7] Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

[8] Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? [9] For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? [10] Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. [11] If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? [12] If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

*Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. [13] **Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?** [14] **In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.***

1 Timothy 3:1-7

*[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the **office of overseer**, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

1 Timothy 4:11-16

*[11] Command and teach these things. [12] Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. [13] **Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.** [14] **Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.** [15] Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. [16] Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

1 Peter 5:1-5

*[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: [2] **shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you;** not for shameful gain, but eagerly; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. [4] And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. [5] Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

This office is only to be held by men as described in 1 Timothy.

1 Timothy 2:8-14

[8] I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; [9] likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, [10] but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. [11] Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. [12] **I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.** [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

- What do you expect from your pastors?

B) Deacons

The second office described in the New Testament is that of deacon. Baptists have often mishandled this office. Quite often you will hear about a “deacon board” that makes policy decisions for a local church. In this scenario, this is who the pastors report to. This is not what we see described in scripture. While we are congregational, it is the elders who lead. The office of deacon is that of a servant. That is what the word means. Deacons are there to carry out the various ministries of the church. This consists of both men and women.

Acts 6:1-6

[1] Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. [2] And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, **“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.** [3] **Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.** [4] **But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”** [5] And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. [6] These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

1 Timothy 3:8-15

[8] **Deacons** likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [11] [Women] likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. [12] Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. [13] For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

[14] I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, [15] if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

- Why is it important for a church to have deacons?

HOW SHOULD I RESPOND?

- A) What difference does this make in my life? How should my life look because of these truths?
- B) What changes do I need to make because of these truths?
- C) How can I share these truths with family, friends, or neighbors?

HOMEWORK

For next week, read Article 7 and all of the associated scriptures with this article.