

## Biblical Church Leadership Structure

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The aim of the Lord Jesus Christ, during His earthly ministry, was to know and do the will of God.  
John 4:34, John 6:38, Mark 14:36, John 5:19, John 5:30, John 8:26, 28, 12:49, 14:10, John 19:30.

Jesus taught that knowing and doing the will of God, was to be the priority of our lives of service to God also.  
And the Old and New Testament teach this clearly from Genesis to Revelation.  
Luke 6:46, Matthew 7:21-23, Matthew 28:19, 20, John 14:15, 1John 5:3, John 15:14, Proverbs 3:5, 6, Matthew 10:28,  
Malachi 1:6, 1Corinthians 7:19, Jeremiah 10:23, Proverbs 20:24, John 13:34, 1Thessalonians 4:2, 3, 2Corinthians 10:6,  
Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

In the leadership of the local Church how can this be achieved? Acts 13:2.  
How can we be an Assembly of God's people walking in the will of God? Matthew 16:18, 18:20.  
How can we live as a Church under the government of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? John 14:26.  
How can we be a theocracy? (A group of people governed by God, the Holy Spirit) Ephesians 2:19-22.

Well, God has given us His Word, the Bible, and He has given to us His Holy Spirit, our Teacher of all things.  
John 17:17, John 14:26, John 16:13, Psalm 119:105, John 8:31-36, Matthew 7:24, 25, John 14:16, 17.  
By these two gifts of God to us: the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, we are able to be an Assembly of God's people, led and  
guided along the pathway of knowing and doing His will.  
John 14:26, John 16:13, 1John 2:27, Proverbs 3:5, 6, Proverbs 4:18, Psalm 119:105, 130, John 17:17, 2Timothy 3:16, 17.

The basic principle of establishing the truth of what God is saying, is the principle of two or three witnesses.  
Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15, 2Corinthians 13:1, 1Timothy 5:19.  
One witness, to ascertain the will of God, is not sufficient. Deuteronomy 17:6.

Therefore in the leadership of the local Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, where knowing the will of God is essential, this principle  
of multiple witnesses is necessary and essential.

In line with this, in the New Testament, the leadership of the local Church **is the responsibility of a group of spiritually mature men, called the elders.**

Acts 13:1-3, (The elders may have various "five fold", Ephesians 4:11 ministry gifts, as mentioned in this reference),  
Acts 14:21-23, Acts 15:4, 6, 22, 23, Acts 21:17, 18, Philippians 1:1, ("Bishops" is Greek, episkopos, overseers),  
1Thessalonians 5:12, 13, 1Timothy 4:14, 1Timothy 3:1-7, ("bishop" is Greek, episkopos, overseer), 1Timothy 5:17-22,  
Titus 1:5-9, Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24, 1Peter 5:1-6.

By reading and considering Acts 20:17 and 28, Titus 1:5-9, 1Peter 5:1-6, it becomes clear that the elders who lead the Church, are  
also the overseers, (episkopos), who shepherd or pastor the flock of God "which He has purchased with His own blood".

From the above references, it seems clear, that the New Testament pattern of "Biblical Church Leadership", **is that the local Church is to be led by a group of spiritually mature men**, called "the elders", who are able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit,  
and be led by the consensus or agreement of what the Holy Spirit is saying to them.

Among the elders, there will be various levels of spiritual maturity and influence, and various gifts and ministries, which means  
that there will be room for leadership within the eldership; as a "first among equals".

In the Church at Jerusalem, James, the Lord's "brother", appears to have had a leadership influence among the Church eldership.  
Acts 21:18, Acts 15:13-22, Acts 12:17, Galatians 1:19, 2:9, 2:12. His ministry gift was that of an apostle. Ephesians 4:11.

From the references to eldership in the Word, it appears that Biblical Church leadership is the responsibility of men and not  
women.

Where a present day local Church has a woman in leadership, as a result of the elders seriously seeking the will of God, let us not  
condemningly judge, because there are Biblical examples of God placing women in places of significant leadership roles.  
Judges chapter 4 and chapter 5 is an example.

Where a mature brother is called by God to establish a local Church in a certain locality, it may be several years before elders can  
be appointed. It takes time for new converts to mature in the Word and in the Spirit. The "mature brother", with probably an  
apostolic gifting, needs to relate to other mature believers, wherever possible, to receive wise counsel and support.

Apostle Paul was able to appoint elders in the Churches mentioned in Acts 14:23, in a short period of time, because many of the  
converts came from the synagogues, and were mature believers in God and thoroughly grounded in the Old Testament.