

BIBLICAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP
Part 2 – Congregational Authority and Responsibility

The biblical model for church leadership structure is that a local church be...

Part 1 – Elders and Deacons

...elder led, deacon served,...

Part 2 – Congregation

... and congregation "ruled."

FOUNDATIONS

- **Jesus is the "chief Shepherd" of His church.** (1 Peter 5:4)
- **Jesus gives the church elders to lead, oversee, and shepherd His flock.** (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- **Jesus gives His church kingdom authority.** (Matthew 16:13-19, 18:15-20, 28:18-20)

*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.**" (Matthew 16:13-19)*

*"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." (Matthew 18:15-20)*

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (John 20:23)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Conclusions:

- **Jesus is the ultimate authority over His church.**
- **The church has a responsibility to exercise the authority given to them by Jesus.**
 - Proclaiming the gospel (how God brings people in to His kingdom)
 - Church discipline (how God protects the purity of His church)
- **Elders are responsible to lead the church by the authority of God's Word.**
 - By setting an example of living under biblical authority
 - By teaching and training the congregation how to do the work of the ministry

RESPONSIBILITY
Job Description of a Church Member¹

1. Attend church regularly

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

2. Help preserve the gospel

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-8)

3. Help affirm gospel citizens

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. (1 Corinthians 5:3-5)

4. Attend members' meetings

5. Disciple other church members

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:15-16, 25, 29)

6. Share the gospel with the lost

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Go therefore and make disciples... (Matthew 28:19)

7. Follow your leaders

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me... (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:10-11)

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

Recommended reading:

Understanding the Congregation's Authority by Jonathan Leeman

Don't Fire Your Church Members: The Case for Congregationalism by Jonathan Leeman

Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus by Jonathan Leeman

The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ by Ray Ortlund

I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference by Thom S. Rainer

¹ Adapted from *Understanding the Congregation's Authority* by Jonathan Leeman, pages 53-57.