The Five-Fold Ministry & Church Government

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Table of Contents

The Pattern and the Glory ............................................................................................................................ 3
Five-Fold Ministry ......................................................................................................................................... 5
Pastoral Church Government ........................................................................................................................ 12
Two Levels of Elders .................................................................................................................................... 14
Traditional Forms of Church Government .................................................................................................. 16
Who is Over the Pastors? ............................................................................................................................ 19
When Leaders Fall Into Sin .......................................................................................................................... 21
Study Questions, Part 1 ................................................................................................................................... 24
Delegated Authority and Submission ........................................................................................................... 28
Board of Directors ....................................................................................................................................... 31
The Jerusalem Model .................................................................................................................................. 33
Moses’ System of Delegation ......................................................................................................................... 35
Appointment and Terms of Elders .................................................................................................................. 38
Study Questions, Part 2 ................................................................................................................................... 40
The Pattern and the Glory

God desires to fill His house with His glory. The glory only comes when divine order and pattern have been established. First the pattern, then the glory. It has always been this way. Moses received the pattern for the Tabernacle on the mount with God (Hebrews 8:5). Later, upon obedience to those instructions, God filled it with His glory. The same held true concerning the Tabernacle of David and the Temple of Solomon. When David tried to bring the Ark of God's presence to Zion without divine order, it met with judgment.

1 Chronicles 15:13 says: The LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.

If God would only fill the type and "shadow of things to come" with His glory when divine order was established, how much more the antitype, the fulfillment of things to come – the Church. Does God expect us to be led on a lower level of order in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit than they were under the law? God wants to fill His house, but His house is no longer a tent or even a building, it is His people (see Acts 17:24; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; I Pet. 2:5).

When God's people find their place in the makeup of His house, God's glory shall be evident! Finding our place is a work of the Holy Spirit within each believer. It is confirmed by the leadership of the local church and by the anointing for service.

We are "living stones" of all different shapes and size that God puts together to build a spiritual house (I Pet. 2:5). Each individual is personally designed by God Himself. A calling, and the gifts to fulfill that calling, were deposited in each of us from our mother's womb (see Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15). Allowing the Holy Spirit to separate us to that calling under the authority of a local church is that which makes us a "Glorious Church" (Eph. 5:27).

To properly understand the function church leadership, it is imperative to understand the offices and functions of the five-fold ministry. The church is to be governed by the five-fold ministry, namely the pastor in
In the Book of Acts, the government of the church was in the hands of the five-fold ministry, where God placed it. The early church had the pattern, therefore, the glory. The reason many churches today don't have the glory of God in them is that they're not under the government of God-appointed, five-fold ministries – the first foundational stone of divine order (see Eph. 2:20-22).
The ministry gifts that God has given to the church are listed in Ephesians chapter four:

**Ephesians 4:11-14**

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

For the body of Christ to reach its full potential, it is important to understand and receive the five-fold ministries and their gifts. The following are brief descriptions of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher:

**Apostles:** Literally "sent ones." There are three levels of apostles:

1. **The "Sent One" from the Father:** Jesus, the One and Only Apostle of the Father (see John 17:18a; Heb. 3:1).
2. **The "sent ones" from the son:** The Twelve. The twelve are in a class to themselves. There will never be another foundational (Eph. 2:20) apostle (See Rev. 21:14; John 17:18b).
3. **The "sent ones" from the Holy Spirit:** Paul and the other apostles called after Christ’s ascension. This would include modern day apostles. These are termed "Body-building" apostles, rather than foundational. Paul was the exception, being a foundational, Scripture-writing apostle. According to Scriptural exactness, the twelve do not qualify as an Ephesian 4:11 apostle; these are post-ascension apostles; the twelve were pre-ascension apostles (See Acts 13:2-4; Eph. 4:8, 11).
Apostles are primarily involved in the pioneering and establishing of local churches. Paul said in Romans 15:20: "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel not where Christ was named lest I should build on another man's foundation."

Apostles are spiritual fathers to other ministries. There is such a need for spiritual fathers and mentors in the Body of Christ. Every Timothy needs a Paul to take him under his wing and develop him. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15).

Signs and wonders will accompany the apostle. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:12: "Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." Heaven's validation of the apostolic gift is the miraculous in operation. Not that miracles occur only through apostles. But any claim to apostleship must be accompanied by a regular occurrence of signs and wonders.

An apostle's ministry will include discipline and correction. Apostles are especially concerned with areas of doctrine. When a pastor or church gets into error, the apostolic gift is greatly needed.

Apostles are involved in the training and ordination of ministries. This can be seen in Paul's continual references to imparting to those under him such as Timothy and Titus. The training of ministries is the heartbeat of an apostle's ministry.

Prophets: There are three major realms of prophecy:

1. **Prophecy of Scripture** (I Pet. 1:20-21). This level of prophecy is complete. All other prophecy must be judged by the Prophecy of Scripture.
2. **The Office of the Prophet** (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). This is someone who operates in the ministry gift of the prophet.
3. **The Gift of Prophecy** (I Cor. 12:10; 14:1, 3, 6). All believers are open to this manifestation of the Spirit. The gift must be operated within the guidelines of Scripture (see I Cor. 14).

A prophet is used to give direction to the church. This is not a controlling directive, but a confirming one. At times, prophets will give direction to individuals, especially those in authority. The prophet Agabus is recorded as prophesying to both the corporate church and
individuals:

- The church, Acts 11:27-29

A prophet's ministry involves revelation, confirmation and warning. The prophet's ministry is especially valuable in identifying and confirming ministry gifts within a presbytery setting (see Acts 13:1-3; I Tim. 4:14).

A prophet will operate in the gift of prophecy, as well as the word of knowledge, word of wisdom, and discerning of spirits. Simply operating in the gift of prophecy does not make one a prophet. A genuine prophet's words will come to pass. There are many self-proclaimed prophets in the land who do not wish their words to be judged for accuracy. However, the Bible mandate is: "Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge" (I Cor. 14:29). A prophet who will not submit to authority and be accountable for his words is not to be heeded (see Deuteronomy 18:22).

Evangelists: Gather in the lost. Theirs is an emphasis of preaching the gospel to sinners.

There will be a certain "fire" to an evangelist's preaching. It could be termed as "revival-type preaching." The word "gospel" means "Good News!" Therefore, an evangelist will carry a message that is narrower in scope than the other five-fold ministries. An evangelist is not called to expound doctrine and theology. Many have been side-tracked by getting out of their anointing.

Evangelists are an equipping ministry, like all of the five-fold gifts. They are given to train believers how to win souls. Too much responsibility is given to the evangelist to win the world by themselves. Their job is to train us all to fulfill the great commission (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-20).

Philip is the only one who is named an evangelist in the entire New Testament (Acts 21:8). Philip began as a deacon and God promoted him. He went to Samaria and held public meetings in which multitudes were saved. God worked miracles through Philip that got the people's attention:

Acts 8:6
The multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

A true evangelist will have the operation of miracles in his ministry.
Signs still point men to Jesus!

In the middle of this revival, Philip obeyed the Lord and went to the desert to win one man to the Lord (Acts 8:26-39). True evangelists have a passion to win souls, both publicly and one at a time.

This ministry is instrumental to the growth of local churches. An evangelist should work in coordination with the local churches in any designated field. Christ's command is not only to convert sinners, but to disciple them. An evangelist should also have a home local church that he is submitted to and from which he works.

**Pastors:** Literally "shepherds." Pastors tend the flock of God, taking direct oversight.

I Peter 5:2-3 exhorts pastors: *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

Pastoring is a ministry of feeding, leading and guarding the sheep. The authority to lead is predicated by the ability to feed. Having a good heart does not qualify one to be a pastor, nor does an educated mind. The ability to feed the sheep comes from the calling and anointing of God. While the other four gifts may itinerate, the pastor's primary responsibility is the local church. Thus we have the heavy emphasis that is placed on this office in respect to the local church. Pastors are the primary care givers to the local congregation.

Though pastors are in the primary leadership position in the local church, they cannot do their job without the other four ministries. A congregation needs to be influenced by all five of the ministry gifts to be brought to maturity (see Ephesians. 4:11-13).

**Teachers:** Ground God's people in the Word of God.

These are not Sunday school teachers, but anointed ministers that bring clarity and understanding to the Word of God. They are avid students of the Word themselves, studying to show themselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15). Someone who has no desire to study is definitely not called to be a teacher.

A teacher must guard against becoming just another "echo." The teachers in Christ's day were just echoes of the rabbis. God wants a
teacher to be a voice not an echo! When Christ the Pattern Teacher taught, people were astonished at His anointing: “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matt. 7:28-29).

Teachers desire to see others come up to their level of understanding and even surpass them. A teacher is not a lecturer that impresses everyone with his knowledge. If no one is learning then no one is teaching! To preach is to proclaim; to teach is to explain.

A teacher should be a sound theologian, well-rounded, not just teaching one subject or doctrine: A teacher should also be a sound hermeneutician, that is, be able to "rightly divide the Word of Truth" (2 Tim 2:15b). Some who call themselves teachers have never developed these skills. The Body should not have to suffer in doctrine just to have the Spirit! Qualified teachers know how to expound the whole truth in a rightly divided manner in the power of the Spirit.

Multiple Offices
These five offices serve the Body of Chris as equipping ministries. Ephesians 4:11 says that only “some” are called to these equipping ministries. It is also stated that only God can do the calling: "And He gave…” In the original Greek this is in the intensive form, literally saying, "He, Himself, and no other gave."

It is possible for a person to be called to more than one office at a time, in 1 Timothy 2:7 Paul refers to himself as an apostle and a teacher. It is also possible to "graduate" to a higher office than previously used in. This is usually the case with the office of apostle. Paul was also called a prophet and a teacher before his apostolic setting apart:

Acts 13:1-4a
1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.
3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.
4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost

Notice that Paul had been standing in the office of prophet and teacher. At this point Paul had been saved for approximately ten
years. When the Holy Ghost spoke, He spoke in terms of separation to a calling that Barnabas and Paul (Saul) had not previously stood in. From that point forth it was "Paul the apostle."

The Work of the Ministry
As previously stated, all of the five-fold offices are equipping ministries. Let us be reminded of the goals of the five-fold ministry, as listed in Ephesians 4:12-16:

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:
14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;
15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:
16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

The Body of Christ is to do the work of the ministry. The ministry of the believer and the priesthood of the believer is never minimized or diminished by the five-fold ministry. The five-fold ministries serve to maximize the ministry and priesthood of every believer. If any of the five-fold ministries is neglected then the Body becomes less effective in essential areas listed in Ephesians 4:12-16, such as:

- The work of the ministry
- Edification
- Unity
- Knowledge
- Maturity
- Doctrine
- Truth
- Love
- The working of every part.

Governning Offices
Out of these five offices, three of them are primarily involved in governing, on the basis of their function and place of operation. They
are the apostle, the prophet, and the pastor.

- **Apostle:** The apostle oversees many churches, being a spiritual father, giving correction when needed.

- **Prophet:** The prophet gives insight and confirmation into the operation of local churches. If the leadership is off course, he brings rebuke and/or adjustment.
  
  - Note: the apostle and prophet's ministry is wider in scope than one local church. They are not involved in the everyday affairs of local church life.

- **Pastor:** The role of the pastor is involved in the everyday affairs of the local church. Therefore, the office of the pastor is the primary governing ministry of the local church. He does not operate independently of the apostle and prophet, or for that matter the evangelist and teacher. The pastor works in cooperation with the other ministry gifts. Ideally, each pastor should be submitted to an apostle.

In fact, may who are called “pastor” are standing in the office of multiple gifts such as apostle, prophet, teacher. However, due to failure to understand the purpose and nature of these gifts, the title of pastor is used to encompass everything. For that matter, none of the five gifts are titles but rather job descriptions – functions. Respect cannot be demanded on the basis of a title. Title power will not set anyone free, only the power of the Holy Spirit.

At The River, we will have the entire five-fold ministry in function. Some gifts may be local – within the church body, while others may be itinerant. The itinerant ministries, though not full-time within the church body, will have a voice into our church, as designated by God.
Pastoral Church Government

The above description has become commonly known as "Pastoral Church Government." When operated with proper checks and balances, this is proper order. Some may disagree and say that the church should be governed by a group of ministers/elders who are equal in authority. While there should be a ministry team and a group of elders in every church, there has to be one head for proper order. In other words, there should be plurality of leadership, but there cannot be plurality of headship.

In the New Testament there are three analogies given to the local church:

1. The Universal Church
2. The human body
3. The marriage relationship

All three of these have only one head! It is clear that the local church should have one head. There should be government over the head (e.g., church fellowship, ordaining organization, apostolic authority), and government under the head (e.g., associate pastors, elders, deacons). However, the ones over him and the ones under him cannot be the same people.

When God was selecting Moses’ successor, listen to what Moses said to God:

**Numbers 27:16-17**

Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd [pastor].

There must be a "Set Man" over the congregation. Headship is not dictatorship. Headship is for the establishment of order. There is even order in the Godhead, 1 Corinthians 11:3 says, "The Head of Christ is God." Christ is equal in terms of deity, but He is submitted to the
Father in terms of order. The set man, or the lead pastor, is not better than the other ministries in the church, but in terms of order, God has placed him at the head.

God sets the members in the Body, every one of them, as it pleases Him (1 Cor. 12:18). It is not man's choice who should be in charge. Man-appointed leadership has bankrupted the church of the power of God for too long.

Jesus addressed the seven churches of the Roman province of Asia in the book of Revelation through the letters of the Apostle John. Each letter to the seven churches was addressed to "the angel" of each respective church. We know that heavenly angels weren't governing those churches. The word "angel" (angelos) literally means "messenger." Jesus was speaking to the messenger of each church. He said the messenger, singular not plural. So while there is plurality of leadership, there is not plurality of headship. As one preacher said, "Anything with more than one head is a monster."

There was plurality of leadership at the church in Jerusalem, but James was the head. This is clear from Acts chapter 15. We will discuss the role of James further, later in the module.
Two Levels of Elders

In understanding the role of elders, it is important to know that there are two levels of elders:

1. Five-fold Elders
2. Supportive Elders

All five-fold ministers are elders themselves. Consider the following Scriptures:

- 1 Peter 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I [Peter] who am a fellow elder
- Both the 2nd and 3rd epistles of the Apostle John begin with "The Elder to..."

All of the five-fold ministry offices are elders. These are the ruling elders. They are called to govern the church of the living God. It should be noted that all that give themselves the title of "pastor" are not called by God. But those that are, are hand-picked and groomed by the Holy Spirit for the task.

God said in Jeremiah 3:15: I will give you pastors according to My heart.

God's pastors are not perfect. However, if God looked beyond their faults to give them the gift and the office, then God's people must look beyond their faults and submit to them.

This distinction and separation in elders can be clearly seen in 1 Timothy 5:17:

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine.

The elders who rule are the ones who labor in the ministry of the Word. Not all do this, as is indicated by the word "especially" concerning those who do. The term "double honor" is referring to
financial provision. Five-fold elders should be supported by the church. The government of the church should be in the hands of those who are directing its affairs on a full-time basis, not in the hands of businessmen who are not called into the five-fold ministry. They have their businesses to run; God has not chosen to qualify them to run the church also. They have their expertise to offer in a supportive role, but those outside of the five-fold calling do not govern the church, except in the supportive role.

When Paul begins to list the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy chapter three, he starts off by saying: "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [elder], he desires a good work" (3:1). This again shows the distinction and separation of elders, for one cannot enter a five-fold ministry because he desires to, he must be called by God. However, a person can desire to become a supportive elder and enter into that role. It should also be noted that God may use a person in a supportive role before He separates him to a five-fold one. Philip was a deacon before he was an evangelist. The process is good hands-on training.

The first mention of appointing elders in the New Testament is found in Acts 14:23: "They [Paul and Barnabas] appointed elders in every church" Please note two things from this first mention:

1. These elders were man-appointed; their call did not come directly through God, as with five-fold ministries.
2. The ones who appoint you are over you in authority. God Himself appoints five-fold ministries, and He is over them.
Traditional Forms of Church Government

A Three-Fold Cord
There are three traditional forms of church government. There are positives and negatives found in each. Imposing one of them without regard to the others will result in imbalance and injury to God’s purposes and His people.

The three types of church government are:

1. **Episcopal** (derived from Greek word for "bishop" or "overseer"): A presiding elder, having been appointed by an overseeing bishop, rules the church. Basically it is a one-man form of government on a local level.

2. **Presbyterial** (derived from the Greek word for "elder"): A plurality of elders rule the church with equal power. The appointment of which comes from the congregation.

3. **Congregational**: A democratic form of government that gives the people the right to hire and fire the pastor, and direct the affairs of the church by voting. It is a committee oriented government.

These forms of government obviously entail much more detail, but this is the basic premise of each. As stated, there are positives and negatives in each of the three traditional forms of church government. Below, I have listed what I see as the major strengths and weaknesses of each system:

**Episcopal**
- **Strengths**: Biblical in its one head (lead pastor) form of government; limits authority to those who are genuinely called of God.
- **Weaknesses**: Potential danger if the one head is of a domineering, Diotrephes-type spirit (see III John 9-10); No checks and balances.

**Presbyterial**
Strengths: Multiple elders provide checks and balances against dictatorship; spreads out the spiritual load instead of it being on one man.  
Weaknesses: Gives no one the mantle of leadership as head, under Christ. Often leaves a church without a God-given vision, as vision primarily comes to individuals (see Acts 26:19).

Congregational

- **Strengths:** Actively involves the congregation in church matters; gives people a feel of ownership, thus are willing to sacrifice.
- **Weaknesses:** The Biblical pattern is a Theocracy (God-rulled), not Democracy (people-rulled); strips God-appointed leaders of their authority; “Laodicea” literally means "people-rulled" (see Rev. 3:14-17).

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says: "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." The early church operated a government that was comprised of the strengths of each of the three traditional forms of church government. The history of the Church shows repeatedly that man takes a portion of divine truth and tries to make it a whole. That is why there are so many denominations with different points of emphasis. Restoration involves taking the good out of the present and eliminating the bad. Even an old cow is smart enough to eat the hay and spit out the sticks.

In the book of Acts we can see the early church operating in the strengths of all three systems. One place that they can all be found together is at the first Church council in Acts chapter 15. The apostles and elders were meeting to discuss the problems that arose with the great influx of Gentile believers. Should circumcision be done away with and so forth? The student should read verses 1-22 for a complete understanding. For the purpose of the subject at hand I only quote that which pertains to each of the three forms of government.

- **Presbyterial:** "So the apostles and elders came to consider this matter" (v. 6).
- **Episcopal:** “Therefore I [James] judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God" (v. 19).
- **Congregational:** "Then it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church" (v. 22).

The decision by James, as the Lead pastor at the Church of Jerusalem, was made only after listening to the counsel of the apostles and elders. As the head of the local church at Jerusalem, James was responsible for making the final decision. However, he exercised much wisdom by...
consulting with those of spiritual maturity and experience. The congregation had complete confidence in their God-appointed leaders. The decision from James pleased not only the apostles and elders, but the entire congregation.

James, as the Lead pastor, was making himself accountable for his decisions. He was not a dictator that ruled independently of the counsel of elders or the well-being of the congregation.
Who is Over the Pastors?

Like James, today's pastors need a system of checks and balances to make them accountable. God needs men and women of integrity. Those who are God-appointed welcome the oversight and counsel of spiritual fathers. We should learn from the mistakes of recent ministries that have fallen. Let us not forget to "consider ourselves lest we also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

Five-fold ministers should govern themselves through a presbytery, a group of five-fold elders in covenant agreement. Fellow ministers that have covenanted together to build up the Body of Christ, and help one another fulfill their callings is a divine pattern of ministry and covering. Everyone needs a covering, especially those on the front lines. May the Lord give us more spiritual fathers and men and women with the loyal hearts of a Jonathan (see 1 Samuel 18).

The ordaining organization of a pastor should serve as an overseeing body. Denominations have built-in oversight in their government, but independent works often lack a true covering. Sadly many ordaining organizations have little or nothing to do with their ministers. Just an annual renewal fee keeps them current as an affiliated minister. God has divine connections for His servants. Without such, a spirit of isolation will try to creep in to the pastor's heart. Independence should not mean isolation! The ordaining organization should serve as a point of oversight, and, if need be, correction. But if that isn't the case, a minister should seek out some type of minister's fellowship in which to affiliate.

Submission to an apostolic authority is also recommended. Only those submitted authority can in authority. Pastors must be willing to submit to people over them in the Lord, and to one another (1 Pet. 5:5).

I was ordained by Lester Sumrall in 1990 and have maintained a close relationship with that ministry. It has been a source of direction for me and God has used that ministry countless times to speak into my life. Dr. Sumrall was a true apostle according to Scripture and his sons continue to carry that mantle.

The purpose in accountability is not to bring people into denominational bondage (it's possible to be in a denomination without
being in bondage). The purpose is to love one another, network our ministries, give prayerful counsel, and protect the flock. The objective is not to control! The spirit of competition must be avoided, because where there is competition, control follows close behind. This is what has happened in many denominations.

One final note about apostolic covering over pastors and churches: the apostolic covering does not dictate over the pastor or the church. A review of the small epistle of Philemon reveals how an apostle provides guidance. Paul was sending back Onesimus to Philemon and the church in his house. Instead of telling Philemon what he was going to do, he instead sought his consent and cooperation.

**Philemon 1:14**

But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

The members of the congregation should have full knowledge of the relationships of their pastors with the overseeing fellowship. In doing so, an example of submission is set for them to follow towards their pastors. As well, there should be some policy in place where the people under a leader can have him removed if he gets into error. Supportive elders are in place to provide this type of protection. I have drawn up a pastoral covenant agreement that monitors the office of the pastor in regards to three areas of concern:

1. Doctrinal Error
2. Moral Failure

Procedures are given in that covenant agreement for dealing with a pastor who has fallen prey to the above problems. The days have come where the truly called and anointed of God want accountability in their ministries. If we do not judge ourselves, we will be judged by the Lord (1 Cor. 11:31-32).

Pastors, elders, deacons, and the entire congregation, along with the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers must work together, each finding their place in the house of God. When that divine pattern is reached, we should expect the glory to fill the house!

As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 3:15:

I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth.
When Leaders Fall Into Sin

What happens when a leader falls into sin? Should there be immediate restoration? Should there be complete removal? Does the Bible tell us how the church should respond? Much debate has centered on these and other questions. The solution of some has been to just ignore the problem and hope it goes away on its own. It doesn’t.

The Bible specifically tells us how to respond to a leader that falls into sin. The passage is found in 1 Timothy 5:19-22. After reading it we will dissect the different steps of the process.

1 Timothy 5:19-22
19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.
20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.
21 I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality.
22 Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins.

Step #1: (v. 19) Due to the honor of the position, a leader must not be accused without two or three reliable witnesses. The church is told not to receive any accusations which are unconfirmed. This is difficult for some, as many want to believe the worst about a leader on the basis of hearsay.

Upon the evidence of two or three reliable witnesses, a leader is to be confronted about his sin. He should be given the facts of the witnesses and given an opportunity to either confirm or deny them. When it becomes established that the elder has fallen into sin, the church leadership should proceed with step #2.

Step #2: (v. 20) The sinning leader should be publicly rebuked. There are certain situations where this would not apply. However, we must not change the instructions of the Holy Word of God! The purpose of this rebuke is not to humiliate the offender but to cause the
congregation to fear God. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. When sin is tolerated among the leadership, it will run rampant in the congregation.

What type of sin would require this extreme measure? The list in 1 Corinthians 5:11 and 6:9-10 serves well:

a. Fornicator  
b. Covetous man  
c. Idolater  
d. Reviler  
e. Drunkard  
f. Extortioner  
g. Adulterer  
h. Homosexual  
i. Sodomite  
j. Thief

These types of offenders have no place in the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-10). The Church is forbidden to fellowship with them (I Cor. 5:11). Certainly they have no place in leadership.

**Step #3:** (v. 21) These instructions are to be followed without prejudice and partiality. Regardless of how well-liked an individual is, there can be no partiality in administering divine correction.

**Step #4:** Verse 22 says: “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily.” This is making reference to the appointment of leaders. Keeping with the context of the passage, it refers to the reinstatement of leaders. The counterpoint of this admonition is: "Nor share in other people's sins" (v. 22b). By laying hands on an offending leader too hastily to reinstate him, the leadership team is sharing in the sin of the former leader.

If reinstatement is not to be done hastily, the conclusion is that it is to be done patiently and progressively. Some believe that it should not be done at all, but this isn’t what Paul is saying. There are certain instances of failure where restoration to leadership is not capable. However, this does not preclude one from restoration to God and the family of God.

In most cases the patient and progressive route is available. This would be considered a probationary period. How long should this be? It is dependent on the individual progress of the person, as well as the level of failure from which one is overcoming. The family of the leader being restored is also of primary consideration. Rushing back into ministry can result in further damage.

Obviously, there can be other types of personal failures that do not
require such a lengthy process. Further, the above mentioned timeframe should not be approached in a legalistic way; there will always be exceptions. On the flip side, there are some who will not respond to correction whether it’s two years or twenty years. The bottom line is that Biblical restoration can be successfully completed. The process may seem slow, but it is well worth the effort and time spent.
Study Questions, Part 1

1. What caused judgment to fall when David first tried to bring the Ark to Zion?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2. Define the term "Divine Order."

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. How is each believer's "place" confirmed within a local body?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. Should the Church be governed by elders and deacons, or the five-fold ministry? Why?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. What is the first foundational stone of divine order? What Scripture shows this?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. Give a brief definition of each of the five ministry gifts.

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________________________________
5. ___________________________________________________________________________________

7. What are the three levels of apostles?

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

8. What are the three major realms of prophecy?

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

9. Who is the only evangelist named in the New Testament?

___________________________________________________________________________________

10. Which ministry gift is the primary caregiver to the local church?

___________________________________________________________________________________

11. What is the difference between preaching and teaching?

Preaching:
___________________________________________________________________________________

Teaching:
___________________________________________________________________________________

12. Why is the office of pastor the primary governing ministry of the local church?

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

13. There should be plurality of _________________, but there cannot be plurality of
_______________.

14. In the New Testament there are three analogies given to the local church; what are they?

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

15. What were the "Angels" of the seven churches of Asia Minor?

___________________________________________________________________________________
16. What are the two levels of elders in the New Testament? What scripture shows this distinction?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

17. Which of the two levels of elders are ruling elders?
___________________________________________________________________________________

18. Why shouldn't businessmen be the ones running the church?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

19. What are the three traditional forms of church government? What is one strength and weakness of each?
1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

20. Where in the New Testament can all three forms of government be seen at work simultaneously?
___________________________________________________________________________________

21. Who was the Senior Pastor at Jerusalem? How did he show much wisdom?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

22. What is a presbytery and how does it function?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

23. Only those ____________________ to authority can be in ____________________.

24. Name some of the purposes of accountability.
___________________________________________________________________________________
25. What three areas of concern are covered in the "Pastoral Contract"? 

1. _________________________________________________________________________________

2. _________________________________________________________________________________

3. _________________________________________________________________________________
Delegated Authority and Submission

Romans 13:1-2 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Heaven is God's throne and the earth is His footstool, everything God does is ruled in order. Authorities exist because God instituted them; they are the "ordinance of God." Authorities exist in spiritual, domestic and civil realms, and every other facet of society. To rebel against authority is to rebel against God!

God's Church is established upon the authority of its Head – the Lord Jesus Christ. However, God has ordained delegated authority under Christ to carry out His purposes in the Church. These authorities are primarily the five-fold ministries He has set in the Church (1 Cor. 12:18). Beyond that, on a local level, we see that there is a chain of command instituted by God Himself.

Scripture teaches us that each local church is to be autonomous, that is, self-governing. Within that self-government there are several authorities which are delegated by God. The order of delegated authority within a given local church would be as follows:

1. Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church; both universal and local. Unless Christ is the Head, all those after Him are laboring in vain (Ps. 127:1). The human body cannot function properly and in coordination without the direct signals of the head. Even so, the Body of Christ cannot properly function without the direct involvement and guidance of its Head, Jesus Christ.

2. The Lead Pastor is essentially the "set man" over the congregation (Num. 27:16). The lead pastor is the primary under-shepherd, under Christ. The lead pastor is responsible for the vision and the implementation of that vision, which entails the facilitation of key roles to those under him. He is an
3. The Pastoral Staff: As a church grows this necessitates the need for more pastoral care. A pastoral staff would consist of associates and assistants. Youth pastors and music ministers may also fall into this category, if so designated by the lead pastor. The pastoral staff is directly submitted to the lead pastor.

The primary role of the pastoral staff is not preaching from the pulpit, though it does not exclude it, but pastoral care to the flock – personal ministry. The congregation and elders should show respect and submission to the pastoral staff for they are the representatives of the lead pastor.

4. The Elders: Supportive elders are not five-fold in function or authority, but a ministry of helps. They undergird and support the pastors. They are burden-bearers. Supportive elders provide pastoral care to the flock by way of prayer, counseling and personal ministry.

The authority of a supportive elder is conditional upon the job description of each elder. If an elder is in charge of the follow-up ministry, then that elder is in authority over the follow-up. However, that same elder is not in authority over the Sunday school ministry. By no means is this an unconditional authority. Elders must be submitted to the entire pastoral staff and ultimately to the lead pastor. Major decisions are not to be made without consulting those in authority.

5. The Deacons: Although not a governmental ministry by definition, a deacon is still in a leadership role. A deacon should be a role model servant. Deacons oversee the physical aspects of church life, and are often called upon to meet spiritual needs by the congregation (e.g., Philip, Stephen). Deacons are under the direct supervision of the elders and are ultimately accountable to the lead pastor.

Submission to those over you in the Lord is a key factor in one’s ultimate success or failure in the things of God. One cannot be in authority who has not submitted to authority.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.
I have the following written in the back of my study Bible:

**Four types of people present opposition to your assignment, vision and ministry:**

1. Those who don’t receive it
2. Those who don’t respect it
3. Those who don’t protect it
4. Those who don’t believe that you can achieve it

When the lead pastor selects those who will help serve the flock in official roles, careful consideration should be given to *not* select someone who meets any of the above descriptions.

When Jesus selected the 12, He spent all night with the Father in prayer:

*Luke 6*

12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles

There were many disciples following Jesus at that point. Jesus didn’t just pick 12 random men. Some track records had been established. Jesus spent all night with God in prayer and carefully selected the 12 based on the Father’s will. A pastor cannot just pick men based on the outward appearance or someone’s success in the business arena. Those appointed to leadership in the church must be prayerfully and carefully chosen.
Most autonomous churches are non-profit corporations. The government recognizes this as 501(c)3 status. The board of directors of a corporation governs the business affairs of that organization. There are several privileges attained by incorporating including:

a. Tax-exempt status.
b. Protection for individual members against lawsuits (though the corporation itself may be sued).
c. Individual members are also shielded from personal liability for the debts of the corporation.

Certain requirements must be met before a church can incorporate. The government is imposing itself more and more upon the affairs of the Church. The 501(c)3 status is not given out as readily as in the past. The financial mishandlings of some big ministries have largely contributed to this. A non-profit corporation cannot be established for the business of making a profit. This is not to say that its officers cannot have a salary, but it must be considered reasonable and not excessive.

Requirements for non-profit incorporation include:

- Preparing articles of incorporation: pertinent information about the organization.
- Having a Constitution and Bylaws: the rules of internal government.
- Having a minimum of three board members and a maximum of nine. President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer are mandatory. The same person may hold two or more offices (other than president and secretary).
- Maintaining records: financial records and minutes of board meetings.
- Conducting an annual business meeting.

The president should be the lead pastor. The other positions should be filled by people of integrity and spiritual maturity, chosen from among the pastoral staff and elders. Additional board members may be
termed advisors. An advisor may be selected from outside the immediate body. If the pastor has a spiritual father or an apostle that he is submitted to, this person would serve well as an advisor.

Although an elder may be selected to be on the board of directors, the board is separate from the elder’s ministry. The two functions are not to be confused. Being an elder does not entitle one to make business decisions for the church. This is the function of the board of directors.

The River is currently entering the process for incorporation.
The Jerusalem Model

Acts chapter 15 records the first general council of the New Testament Church. As previously mentioned, dissention had entered the Church over the influx of Gentile believers. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and he had been having a mighty move of God. Gentiles were receiving the gospel far more readily than the Jews. The dispute was over the law of Moses, especially circumcision. Should the Gentile believers be circumcised and obey the Mosaic law?

The following is an excerpt from that meeting:

Therefore when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question ... So the apostles and elders, came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe"... Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent James answered saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me ... Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God"... Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church (Acts 15:2, 6-7, 12-13, 19, 22)

There was a coming together of the apostles and elders over this matter. No one person was in a position to hand down a decision without such a meeting. Paul and Barnabas represented the interests of the Gentiles. Peter also spoke up for the Gentile believers. Remember it was Peter that first brought the gospel to a Gentile household (Acts 10).
There was a chain of command or authority at the Church of Jerusalem. It was not a dictatorship but James, the half-brother of the Lord, was the head, or the lead pastor at Jerusalem. After much discussion and prayer James arose and gave his decision (v. 19). Wait a minute, didn't they take a vote? No! Remember, the House of the Lord is not governed by a democracy (people-ruled), but a theocracy (God-ruled). God rules through delegated authority. James was the man that God hand-picked to be in charge of the Jerusalem church. The final decision was his.

The rest of the apostles and elders, along with the congregation, submitted to the judgment of James (v. 22). A wise leader will listen to those God has placed around him. He will also listen to the Holy Spirit, and be bold enough to make a decision. A lead pastor cannot be double-minded, back and forth. And, if so required by the Holy Spirit, he must be able to rise up against the tide of popular opinion and take a stand. At that point the elders should stand with their leadership (unless morally, doctrinally, or ethically in error) and give their full support. A divided spirit cannot be allowed!
Moses’ System of Delegation

Exodus 18:21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness: and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

The delegation of authority by Moses was based upon each individual elder's ability. Some were given more responsibility than others. Yet each had their own segment of the congregation that they were responsible for. They were to deal with and resolve the small matters and bring the great matters to Moses.

Some church government experts think that a local church needs a supportive elder per every ten families. The average family equals out to 2.5 people; this means that for every 25 people in the congregation an elder is needed. A church of 100 would need four elders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Elders Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course it doesn't always work out this way, for many reasons. But it is a good guideline to grow by. It has also been said that a pastor can only truly pastor about 200 people. At that point, major changes have to be made to accommodate further growth. Delegation of authority and facilitation of ministry have to be accepted by the congregation to move beyond that barrier. If it has not been a practice up to this point, rough sailing lies ahead. Jesus put the principle of delegation and facilitation into practice with twelve. Start when you're small!

If an elder is assigned to ten families, what does this entail? The following is a list of some of the responsibilities involved:
Study Notes

- Making sure each family is in attendance at the worship services, and if not, finding out why.
- Being available for personal ministry through the week and before and after services.
- Helping to resolve any conflicts or division that occurs with those families and someone else in the church. Enforcing Matthew 18:15-17.
- Representing the pastors in a positive light at all times.
- Regularly calling and/or visiting the ten families of one's responsibility.
- The members of the congregation are to call their assigned elder if personal ministry or prayer is needed (James 5:14).

The pastors should give great prayer and attention to the selection of members under a particular elder's care. If problems arise within the relationship, the pastors should step in and resolve it. At times it is best to reassign the member to another elder (after strife has been resolved).

Under this system of delegation an elder has authority within the boundaries of his assignment. At all times, an elder is an extension of the pastoral office. The authority of the elder goes only as far as his submission to the pastor extends it. To avoid a sectarian spirit from developing it may be necessary to occasionally reassign the elders to different families. Without proper oversight from the pastors, a split may occur when an elder takes too much upon himself (see the story of Korah: Numbers 16).

An Elder's Honor
The position of elder within the local church is one of honor. Because of the responsibilities and the hard work of these faithful few, there should be a respect for them in the eyes of the congregation. Elders are part of the authority that God ordained. To show disrespect for an elder is to disrespect God.

1 Timothy 5:1 says "Do not rebuke an elder." This is primarily speaking of chronological age, but the principle of respect applies to spiritual elders as well.

Just like pastors, elders are not perfect. If one looks for faults, then faults will be found. If God needed someone perfect to work through then He would have no one besides Jesus. The treasure of the anointing is within earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7). God does not say to submit to personalities but to the office. When one's heart is submitted to God, it is possible to submit to someone of personal dislike.
The elder's ministry is part of the pastoral ministry that oversees a church. As such, respect and submission should be shown them by the congregation. They should be recognized as spiritual leaders within the flock.

I Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we urge you brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.
Appointment and Terms of Elders

It is important to understand how one enters the office of a supportive elder, as well as how one leaves that same office, if the situation arises. Supportive elders are God-gifted but man-called. Let me clarify that: the gifts that make one suitable to be an elder are given by God, but the appointment is not divine, on the level of a five-fold calling. Concerning the five-fold ministry, the Word says, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). This type of appointment by God Himself is never connected with supportive elders in the local church. How then are supportive elders appointed? Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 answer this question.

Acts 14:23
So when they [Paul and Barnabas] had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5
For this reason I [Paul] left you [Titus] in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.

It is clear from these two verses that elders are chosen and appointed by the office of the pastor and/or apostle.

The term of an elder is indefinite unless certain circumstances develop. These conditions include:

- Sin in the elder’s life
- Unfaithfulness to church
- Insubordination to the pastor and/or staff
- An elder’s lack of desire and commitment to continue in the office
Other situations may also occur which necessitates the removal of an elder, such as physically moving from the area.

It is within the pastor’s responsibilities to appoint or dismiss an elder for legitimate reasons. As we will see in the module on elders, removal is not to be done based on the elder not being a “yes man.” God is not looking for yes men, nor are godly pastors. But when legitimate reasons develop, removal should be done by the pastor. He that appoints you is over you in the Lord. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive” An important spiritual principle remains: he who has the authority to appoint you has the authority to remove you.

Additional modules in this series include:

- The Biblical Qualifications and Functions of an Elder
- The Biblical Qualifications and Functions of a Deacon
Study Questions, Part 2

1. To rebel against ______________ is to rebel against God.

2. To whom has Jesus delegated authority to carry out His purposes in the church?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

3. What does *autonomous* mean and how does it relate to church government?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4. What is the proper order in a local churches’ *chain of authority*?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5. Why does there need to be a chain of authority in a local church?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6. What is the lead pastor responsible for in the chain or order?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

7. What is the role of the pastoral staff within a church?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

8. What is the authority of a supportive elder conditional upon? Explain.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

9. Are deacons a governmental ministry?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
10. Explain what 501(c)3 represents.
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

11. Who governs the affairs of a non-profit corporation?
_____________________________________________________________________________________

12. What are the requirements for a non-profit corporation?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

13. What is the difference between the board of directors and the elder’s ministry?
_____________________________________________________________________________________

14. What was the outcome of the Church council at Jerusalem? What procedure was employed to arrive at this outcome?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

15. How many people can one pastor personally minister to and genuinely pastor? What changes have to be made to accommodate further growth?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

16. What are some of the responsibilities of an elder towards his assigned families?
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

17. What should be done if conflict arises between an elder and one of his assigned members?
18. What may be done to avoid church splits from occurring in this system of delegation?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

19. What are the four steps involved in dealing with a sinning elder?

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________________________

20. Explain how one enters the office of an elder, and how one is to leave that same office, if the situation arises. Name the important spiritual principle given.

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
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_____________________________________________________________________________________

42