

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, Mr. Douglas' mother, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Mr. Mathis, Lamar Mathis, Ms. Matchett, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mr. Sowder, Mr. Winns.
Out of town: The Dowlings

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com.
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

Oak Grove Church of Christ Bulletin

2922 NW 76th Terrace, Jennings, FL 32053

August 5, 2018

The Organization of the Church

By Derek Long

Churches today are organized and structured in a variety of ways but God, in the Bible, clearly lays out His plan for how local congregations are to be organized. We need to be familiar with God's plan for the organization of local churches and seek to be scripturally organized as the people of God.

The church at Philippi was a church which was organized scripturally (Philippians 1:1). The church at Philippi was composed of saints as all local churches are. With the saints in the church at Philippi were bishops and deacons. The word "bishop" refers to someone who is an "overseer." These men would oversee the congregation. The word "deacons" refers to "servants." Deacons would be special servants within the local congregation. Churches need to seek to become scripturally organized with bishops and deacons.

God has laid out qualifications for those who would serve as bishops and deacons. Qualifications are listed for those who would serve as bishops or elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Qualifications are listed for those who would serve as deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In order to serve as a bishop or deacon, one must meet the qualifications given by God. It is important we do not add to nor take away from the qualifications God has given for elders and deacons.

God's design is for there to be a plurality of elders in every church. Paul commanded Titus to "set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). As Paul and Barnabas returned through the cities where they had previously preached the gospel, we are given an account of their activities. They were "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.' So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:22-23). Every church in every city was expected to have a plurality of elders. The Bible never speaks of simply having one elder within the local congregation. Clearly, churches existed for a period of time without elders if elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). A congregation may be pleasing to God and not have elders because they may be without men who meet the qualifications God has given for elders. Each congregation needs to be striving to have a plurality of elders though.

Elders are referred to by different terms all stressing a certain aspect of their work. Elders are referred to as elders (Acts 20:17). The term "elders" may refer to the fact these are older individuals. Elders are also called "bishops." In Titus 1:5-6, Paul speaks of the need to appoint elders and then in Titus 1:7 speaks about what a bishop must be. The reason he can transition from elder to bishop is because they are the same group of people referred to by two different designations. In Acts 20:28 we read of Paul telling the elders of Ephesus "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Remember the term "bishop" refers to an overseer. Therefore, those individuals who are elders are also bishops. Additionally, elders are

referred to as pastors or shepherds. Acts 20:28 records Paul commanding the elders at Ephesus, "to shepherd the church of God." The reason they need to shepherd the church of God is because the elders are the shepherds or pastors. 1 Peter 5:1-2 speaks of all three of these terms in one passage. Peter tells the "elders" to "shepherd" and be those who are "serving as overseers."

God has limited the authority of elders. In Acts 20:28 Paul commanded the elders of Ephesus, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Elders have the job of shepherding some flock of God. 1 Peter 5:2 tells us more specifically which flock they are to shepherd. 1 Peter 5:2 says, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly." Elders only have authority from God to shepherd the flock of God they are members of.

Today, we see men who oversee several congregations throughout a large geographical area and yet such is without the approval of God. Today, we see churches where there is only one "pastor" instead of a plurality of "pastors" or "elders." Today, we see churches where decisions are made not by the oversight of the elders but through some sort of voting process. All of these things are not things we read about in the Bible. If you are a part of a church which is not seeking to follow the Bible's pattern for organization, we encourage you to find a church which is following God's pattern in all things. Remember Timothy was told "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

