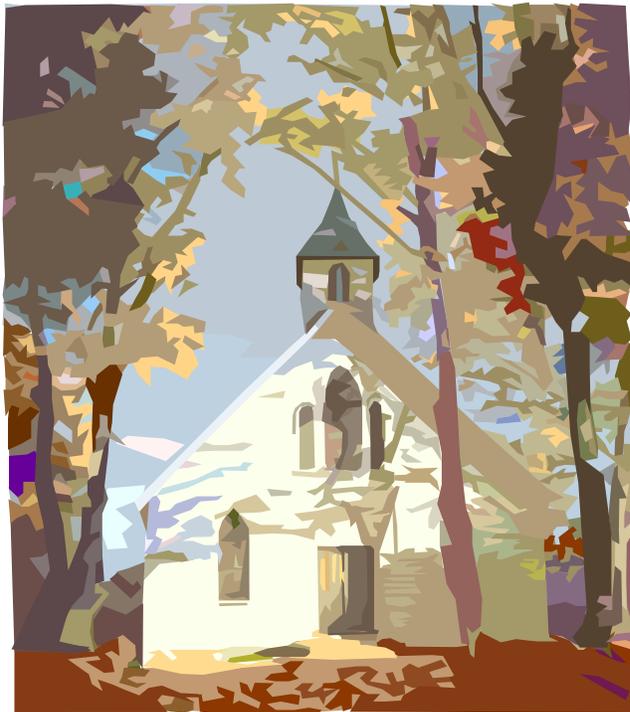


THE CHURCH: ITS PURPOSE, FUNCTION AND OFFICERS



By Dr. Willis C. Newman

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Introduction:

This brief work was taken from my wider doctrine regarding the church that I wrote some 20 years ago. I have revised and expanded some of the portions to make it suitable for teaching of the duties of pastor. It is also to compliment my commentary on the Pastoral Epistles of 1, 2 Timothy and Titus.

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The Church: its purpose, functions, and officers. **By Dr. Willis C. Newman**

The intent of this brief paper is to outline, in some detail, several factors regarding the Church whose head is Jesus Christ, and whose members include all those who have believed upon and received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

The first task is to define the church, lay forth the Divine Purpose of the church, and then to describe the function of the church. With this background, the next step is to examine the biblical base for the officers of the church as well as their duties. Finally, we will examine the ordinances of the church, and give some suggestions regarding weddings and funerals.

Baseline verses

Before I start with the details, it is well that we have in view some baseline verses regarding the high importance, nature, and reward of the pastoral ministry. It will set the mood for us.

Peter said, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Paul wrote, "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2).

Again, listen to Paul, "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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" (Acts 20: 28).

Paul explained, "for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2 Timothy 1:11).

I. THE DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH

1. The Greek word for Church is "ekklesia." The word means, "called out ones," or "assembly." It is used some 117 times in the New Testament, and all but five refer to the called out ones of Christ. In over 85 of those usages it

refers to a local church.

The word is never used of a physical structure, a state or national church, a denomination, the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. The church (*ekklesia*) is never designated as Israel. In the New Testament *ekklesia* took on a technical meaning to define those belonging to Christ. Jesus point out this uniqueness when He said, "I will build My church" (Matt 16:18).

The church is presented in the Bible as both a **universal and local church**. Let me explain.

2. By evaluating the usages in the New Testament, we find there to be two basic meanings for the *ekklesia* of Christ. First, there is **the universal church**. It includes all those who have been born of the Spirit and baptized into the body of Christ. This includes those born again Christians from all denominations, races, nationalities, age groups, and spanning history from the beginning of the Church at the day of Pentecost until the future Rapture of the Church (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 11:14, 15; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Th 4:13ff).

This universal meaning is used in Hebrews, "to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect (Hebrews 12:23; cf. 1 Pet 1:3, 22-25; 1 Cor 12:13. The Church Universal is mostly invisible to us on earth because it includes those Christians in heaven and now alive on this earth.

Paul referred to the Universal Church when he wrote,

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless" (Eph 5:25-27; Cf. Eph 1:22, 23; 3:10; Col 1:18).

Sometimes this church is referred to as the "body" of Christ of which He is the head, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it...and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body" (1 Cor 12:13, 27; Eph 1:22, 23). The book of Ephesians has as its theme God eternal purpose to establish and complete His body, the church.

As the body of Christ, the church is an "organism" to which He supplies spiritual life, indwells and through which he displays the fullness of His power and grace. Since the church is an "organism," then it cannot be defined in solely in human terms as an "organization" of people whose objective is social, political or general good works. The Universal Church transcends this world.

The local church definition

The second sense which the Bible defines the church is the local, visible organization that we see scattered about on earth. In this sense the Universal Church takes a local and temporal form on earth.

This aspect of the church in the New Testament may be defined as, “A particular organized assembly of believers, preaching the Word of God faithfully, observing the ordinance of baptism, observing the Lord’s Supper regularly, working together to carry out the commands of Christ, and the teachings of the New Testament.”

In this meaning there is, for example, the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:22), Antioch (Acts 13:1), Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and others (cf. Romans 16:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2; Col 4:16; 1 Th 1:1; 2:14; 2 Th 1:1; Rev 1:4). Following historically the end of the New Testament era, the various forms of church government began to arise – such as the Roman Catholic hierarchal government.

The local church emerged simply at first, and in a bond of love, fellowship, cooperation and common purpose. As time went on and need arose the organization came about. Christ was working through the members. At the start of the church, there was only one local church in Jerusalem with meetings held in various homes.

Later, local churches emerged in new places and the Gospel was preached and people were saved. There was no question in the minds of the early Christians that they were to join a local church.

Local churches were the grassroots organizations that the missionaries planted to carry out the work of God on earth (cf. Titus 1:5). The local church is critically important to God. I illustrate below.

The Bible says, “And on that day a great persecution arose against the **church** in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered...But Saul began ravaging the **church** –underlines mine (Acts 14:27).

After Paul’s conversion we are told that Barnabas was sent by the local church at Jerusalem to help ground the believers in Antioch. He found Paul, “And it came about that for an entire year they met with the **church**, and taught considerable numbers” –underlines mine (Acts 8:1, 3).

It was this local church that sent out Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). It was to this church that they reported back, “And when they had arrived and gathered the **church** together, they began to report” – underline mine (Acts 14:27).

The record tells us that on Paul's missionary sojourns, he planted local churches, "And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are...And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches'" – underline mine (Acts 15:36, 41).

On Paul's last journey back to Jerusalem, and passing through Ephesus, he, "called to him the elders of the church" – underline mine (Acts 20:17). He told the elders, "Be on guard for yourselves and for 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" – underline mine (Acts 20:28).

The local church is the basic grassroots system of the plan of God for worldwide evangelism. There is a legitimate use of para-church organizations that are extensions of the church. But, they get their support from the local church, as even does the denominational hierarchy and mission boards. Even though much individual support is given missionaries, and independent mission agencies, those supporters are found in and are part of local churches.

The para-church and faith mission groups are of recent origin. God has used them greatly. Other organizations were built from time to time through the ages: schools, hospitals, mission agencies, evangelistic organizations, literature and printing operations, monastic orders, radio stations, etc.

Para-church organizations along with denominations are not clearly seen in Scripture. They are both products of history. They are not expressly forbidden – and, if denominations are legitimate, then so are para-church organizations. Every organization however must have as its objective the planting and building up, strengthening, encouraging, equipping, training, assisting, and helping the local church of Jesus Christ.

II. THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

Having now examined the nature and definition of the church, both universal and local, let me turn to the Divine Purpose of the Church that belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The church was made for service. It is the instrument through which Christ accomplishes His will in the world (cf. Eph 1:23; John 15:1-5; 1 Cor 12:27-30). This also includes being, "the household of God, which is the church of the loving God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Ti 3:15). As well as being the depository of "truth," the church is to proclaim the gospel to all creation (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-48).

To see how special the church is to God, Peter wrote, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession,

that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Again we are informed, “that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (Titus 2:14). These verses speak clearly of who we are, as Christians, and what our main job is.

2. The church is for manifesting the moral glory of Christ to the universe, the ethical outshining, or the outliving of salvation, “and I have been glorified in them” (John 17:10; cf. vv. 22, 23).

3. The church is for exhibiting to the universe the wisdom and grace of God, “in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10; cf. vv. 8-11; 2:6, 7).

4. The church is made to experience Divine fellowship, to be with Christ throughout eternity and to share His glory: *“Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me”* (John 17:24; Rev 20:6, chapter 21; Rom 8:17; 1 Jo 1:3ff.).

We have now examined the nature of the church by its definition and Divine Purpose. From here we proceed to discuss the functions of the church, which gets us closer to the roles that pastors and others have within the local church.

III. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH.

A. EXAMPLE OF THE FIRST CHURCH

The first local church, which was in Jerusalem, leaves the following record from which we may draw some observations.

“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:41-47).

1. They promoted evangelism by several means, including preaching and working with the Lord as He was adding numbers daily.

2. They devoted themselves to the study of the Word of God.
3. They gathered together for fellowship, sharing, with Christ as the common element.
4. They worshipped, with a sense of awe, praising God.
5. They devoted themselves to prayer.
6. They involved themselves in social action by mutual helpfulness. They established a Christian welfare system.
7. They performed the ordinances. Baptism is listed, and the breaking of bread could be a reference to the Lord's Supper.
8. Later on they began organizing themselves and established a division of labor (Acts 6:1-7).
9. Under God they sent out missionaries, winning souls, planting and organizing churches and training converts (Acts 13:1-3; 14:21-23; 15:36, 41).
10. They built Bible colleges to train disciples and Christian leaders, with a chief focus on Bible teaching and evangelism (Acts 19:8-10, 20, 26; 20:27). Bible teaching covered all the aspects of theology: "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27). Further, Bible study was life related, and considered the chief means of building up Christians, "*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*" (Acts 20:32; cf. v 20; 19:18-20).
11. They used literature to evangelize and teach.

Now that we have observed some of the activities of the early church, we may next turn to a more extended discussion on the vital functions of the church.

B. THE CHURCH IS TO GLORIFY GOD.

1. **Our main purpose is to glorify God.** That is why we were created. The Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 1 states: "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy Him forever." Paul states: "*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Co 10:31; Rom 15:6,9; Eph 1:5,6,12,14,18; 3:21; 2 Th 1:12; 1 Pe 4:11).

2. **We glorify God by worship.** ISBE defines worship as: "Honor, reverence, homage, in thought, feeling, or act, paid to men, angels, or other 'spiritual' beings, and figuratively to other entities, ideas, powers, or qualities, but specifically and supremely to Deity." Worship carries the ideas of prostrate, render homage, venerate, hold in awe, and serve religiously.

Worship is an attitude of the spirit in the adoration of God, dependent upon neither time, place nor ceremony, "*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). Jesus also connected worship to service (Matt 4:10).

In common usage the term "worship" has come to mean those various acts performed by the church in its meetings. The acts themselves are not worship in its ultimate sense. The acts may be, however, vehicles by which the spirit can worship God. Without the appropriate inner attitude the external acts become useless forms. With this in mind, we may give attention to the formats of worship practiced by the New Testament church.

Christians met together:

Meeting together by members to worship was a prominent mark of Christianity. This caused misunderstanding to the pagans who could only worship in a temple. To forsake the gatherings was a serious failure for Christians (Heb 10:25). The final objective of the church is that great and permanent assembly that someday will be one mighty rally in heaven (1 Ti 4:17; 2 Th 2:1; Heb 10:25; 12:23).

Christians met in the Jewish temple (Acts 2:46), synagogue buildings (Jas 2:2), public buildings (Acts 8:8-19; 20:20), private homes (Acts 20:8; 12:12; 1 Co 16:19), and church buildings which was a much later development.

They met daily (Acts 2:46), weekly (Acts 20:7; 1 Co 16:2) and at special times (Acts 12:5, 12). The first day of the week seems to have been the regular time of meeting. The first daily meetings were for the purpose of bearing witness in a great evangelistic meeting.

The types of meetings were both public (1 Co 14) and private (1 Co 11) and were sometimes in the evening (Acts 20:7-8).

Some meetings were private, evidently to keep the Lord's Supper. It appears these meetings were secret and did not include the presence of outsiders. This aroused suspicion among the surrounding public, and produced pagan accusations against Christians. One charge against Christians was that they practiced cannibalism in secret – which was false. The Didache commands privacy for the Lord's Supper.

Regarding the Eucharistic (i.e. the Lord's Supper or Communion) thanksgiving, the Didache states: "But let no one eat or drink of this Eucharistic thanksgiving, but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord; for concerning this also the Lord hath said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs" (Didache, paragraph 9). The Didache was a Christian church manual dating about A.D. 75-125. It does not have the authority of inspiration, but is a good historical document.

Other meetings were public. The purpose was for the edification of believers and winning the unsaved (1 Co 14:23-26).

Various activities made up the content of the meetings, and can serve a pattern for our modern church services.

Early Church services included:

- Reading of Scripture, with practical explanation and application (1 Ti 4:13; Col

4:16; Rev 1:3).

- Preaching of the gospel (Acts 2:14ff. 20:7; 1 Ti 4:11-16; 2 Ti 4:2-5).
- Praise was offered to God (1 Co 14:26-32).
- Singing of hymns (Acts 16:25; Mark 14:26; 1 Co 14:15, 26; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).
- Prayer was offered to God (Acts 1:14; 4:23-31; 6:6; 12:12; 1 Co 14:14-17; 11:5).
- Financial offerings were taken (1 Co 16:1-2).
- The ordinances of baptism and the Lords Supper were conducted (1 Co 11:17ff. Acts 2:41; Matt 28:19).
- Confession of Faith was expressed. The first confession was that of Peter, prior to the church, then the baptismal formula, then eventually the Apostles Creed.
- Confession of sins was practiced in the Apostolic (early) church: "And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confession your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure" (Didache, paragraph 14).

3. We glorify God by prayer and praise, "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me" (Psa 50:23; cf. Heb 13:15, 16).

4. We glorify God by living a godly life and faithful service: "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8; cf. Titus 2:10; 1 Pe 2:9).

The Apostle's Creed:

Following is a reading of the Apostle's Creed, which is a confession of our Faith, and is read by many churches for each service. It is a sound expression of the Christian Faith. The word, "catholic" is a reference to the Universal Church, not the Roman Catholic Church.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, Amen.

C. THE CHURCH IS TO EDIFY ITSELF.

To edify is to build up: *"having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude"* (Col 2:7; cf. v. 8).

Gifted men (pastors, evangelists, teachers) are given as gifts to the church by God to equip, mobilize, train, motivate and to indoctrinate Christians in the things of God, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the

building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11, 12; cf. vv. 13-16).

The purpose is to have a defense against false teaching, conform the church to the image of Christ, develop spiritual life and prepare the church to work together for its task in the world.

Attending public services, sitting under good Bible preaching and systematic teaching, special training, private devotions and Bible study are methods used – and then practicing in daily life the teachings of the Bible (1 Co 14:26; Jude 20; 1 Co 3:10-15).

D. THE CHURCH IS TO PURIFY ITSELF.

1. Paul stated that Christ: *"might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless"* (Eph 5:26, 27).

2. God the Father purges the church through divine chastening (John 15:2; Heb 12:10; 1 Co 11:32). Believers also ought to purge themselves from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Co 11:28-31; 2 Co 7:1; 1 Jo 3:2)._

3. One factor of purification is that of church discipline. I must devote some time to develop this topic. There are two extremes to church discipline: on the one hand, the local church has no restraint on sin. On the other extreme, the church becomes too strict and punishes any form of what they might think is sin. Other churches become selective in their punishing sins by being hard on some sins, but overlooking other sins.

A very wise pastor once told me, and I have witnessed it in my own life, that church gossips cause more trouble in a local church than those involved in adultery. It seems like the adulterers get guilty and leave the church, but the gossips stay and gossip. Both are sins. Following are principles regarding church discipline.

Discipline is a duty, not an option, of the church (Matt 18:15-18; 1 Co 5:1-13; 6:1-10; 2 Co 2:5-7; 7:8-12; 2 Th 3:6-15; 1 Ti 5:19-24). This obligation is a command. Churches sometimes neglect it because they follow the line of least resistance. It is easier to avoid the hassle. But in trying to get away from facing trouble they sometimes get into worse problems.

Discipline is conducted when there is trouble between members (1 Co 6:5-6; Matt 18:15-17), in the case of disorderly conduct (2 Th 3:6-15; Rom 16:17; 1 Co 5:11) and gross sins (1 Co 5:11-13). In the list of gross sins we find sins of sex, money, religion, speech and lust. Fornication and covetousness are listed together. Heresy is also occasion for discipline (Titus 1:10-16).

Disciplinary penalties take the form of private admonition (2 Th 3:15; 1 Th 5:14), public censure (1 Ti 5:20), social rejection (2 Th 3:6, 14; 1 Co 5:11). This rejection does not necessarily involve excommunication. It means the withdrawal from the offender the ordinary forms of social fellowship. Further, it does not involve total ostracism (2 Th 3:15). Such treatment is powerful when used correctly. The harshest penalty is

excommunication (1 Co 5:1-13). Commentators are not agreed as to the precise meaning of verse 5, but verse 13 is very clear.

The disciplinary procedure is to have a good investigation and clear proof of any allegations (1 Co 5:11; 1 Ti 5:19), Solemn action by the whole church (1 Co 5:4-5; 2 Co 2:6) and genuine restoration to fellowship on evidence of genuine repentance (2 Co 2:6-8).

The purpose of church discipline is to honor Christ (1 Co 6:15), to protect the church (1 Co 5:6) and for the good of the backslider (Gal 6:1; 2 Th 3:14-15; 1 Co 5:5). Stern action often brings people to their senses.

The general practice in church discipline is to deal with the offence within the scope of its influence. For example, offences within a marriage are to be dealt with within that sphere, and not aired to the whole church - unless it affects the whole church. The pattern is given in Matthew 18:15-20. One first goes to the person for private consultation. If that fails, then there is to be small group confrontation. If this step does not succeed, then there is to be church censure. The step of last resort is excommunication. Fervent prayer is to be used before, during and after the process.

A disciplined church is one that is pure doctrinally (Titus 1:9), morally (1 Co 5:1-13), ethically (Acts 5:1-11), is submissive to the lordship of Christ (Col 1:15-18), the control of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:15-21), the instruction of the Bible (Col 3:12-17), and to the watch care of the pastor. The pastor has a responsibility to the people (1 Pe 5:1-4) and the people to the pastor (Heb 13:7, 17). The people are in submission to one another (Eph 5:21) and look to the well-being of one another (2 Th 3:6-15).

I make several practical comments regarding discipline.

First, those individuals who are spiritually mature and are of humble heart are to be involved in any discipline (Gal 6:1; Matthew). The objective is to restore the backslider. Remember, we have been given the ministry of reconciliation, not judgment (2 Cor 5:18). We would all do well to heed the words of Jesus before we become too quick in judging our brothers and sisters in Christ. He said,

“Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or, how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).

Remember the grace of God extended toward you. A good principle to follow is this: treat others like you would want to be treated under similar circumstances (cf. Matthew 7:12).

Second, when people leave the church and show no response to genuine efforts to bring them back, they need not be ejected. They are already out. All the church needs to do is remove their names from the roll so as to make the roll conform to the facts. The church should have definite biblical standards on this point written into their by-laws before the

need arises. If you try to make up the rules when in the midst of a church disagreement, it is more likely that rash decisions will be taken, and a hotter controversy will erupt.

Unless absolutely necessary, the pastor should act only as a presiding officer in cases brought to the church. It is best for him not to take a partisan position unless the situation demands it. When he finds a case requiring disciplinary action, let him inform his officers of the facts and let them investigate and bring the charges. This keeps the pastor from the role of prosecutor. This is a fact: when church member is disciplined, people will take sides, and the potential for a church split increases. Be careful and wise.

Third, the pastor needs to teach the church well before attempting to introduce discipline. It is the church that must do the work. The pastor cannot enforce church discipline himself. It is for him to teach the church what to do and lead when appropriate.

In teaching the church on discipline, the pastor should not wait until the need arises before he brings up the subject. He should not begin his ministry by teaching church discipline because the people may suspect ulterior motives. Preach a series of sermons or studies on the general subject of the church, and then let discipline be taught as a part of the whole doctrine. One may also give a series on the Corinthian epistles which covers these matters.

Be cautious. Remember that you must deal with sin firmly and consistently, but the Christian caught up in sin is a child of Christ. Treat them with grace, forgiveness, and empathy – and always with an eye to reconciliation and healing.

E. THE CHURCH IS TO EDUCATE ITS MEMBERS.

1. Jesus commanded the church, regarding the converts: *"teaching them to observe all that I commanded you"* (Matt 28:20). The command was to educate, the content was "all" that He taught. This involves a huge undertaking, taking an entire lifetime to complete the project for an individual. In this lifetime we are never at a point where we know it all.

2. The church is duty bound to put in educational programs for the members. This would include small group, life related Bible study, Sunday schools, youth work, literature production and distribution. There needs to be training facilities to prepare pastors, evangelists, teachers, missionaries, seminary professors. It is biblical to pursue all areas of higher education (cf. Phil 4:8).

The church must seek to develop Christ centered education for all its members, and even to provide that alternative for those outside the church. The church has a unique role: *"the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth"* (1 Ti 3:15b). Secular education and that of other religions turn people away from the living God.

The church is the depository of truth; consequently, church leaders and members must know the truth. Truth is contained in the Bible; therefore, know your Bible. This gives justification to build Christian universities as well as Bible schools and seminaries. Bible colleges and seminaries can also create programs to compliment secular education, to help the graduates evaluate what they learn from a biblical point of view.

The training programs should contain practical subjects along with theology and Bible doctrine. This would include things such as marriage relationships, conflict management, how to witness, pray, and effectively impact our community for Christ.

F. THE CHURCH IS TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD

The Great Commission is the heart of the church functions,

"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age'" (Matt 28:18-20; cf. Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 10:42,43; 13:47; 13:1-4; Rom 1:14-15; 10:14-17).

The three most important ingredients in world evangelism are proclaiming the gospel, presenting of the Word of God and prayer (Matt 9:38). The church is to send missionaries (Rom 10:15) and contribute to their support (Phil 4:15-18). World evangelism is to continue until Christ comes again at the completion of the church (Rom 11:25; Acts 15:14ff; Matt 28:20).

Methods of evangelism vary, including church planting, door to door, literature, citywide campaigns, campus and young people's ministry, radio, T.V., schools, one-on-one, camping - the main principle is to use every available affordable means at every available time to reach every available person for Christ.

By evangelism the Bible means to go into the entire world with a spiritual agenda, not a political, economic or social agenda. The church is to do good in the world, but proclaiming the gospel is top priority. The gospel does not mean giving our energies to bring about justice and relieve oppression in the world. Getting people saved, and training them to live godly, biblical lives will bring justice and relieve oppression.

The gospel is a personal message, directed to individual people about their personal sin and a personal eternity in heaven or hell. Paul said: *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to Scriptures"* - underling mine (1 Cor 15:3,4). We must keep first things first.

G. THE CHURCH RESISTS EVIL AND ENLIGHTENS THE WORLD.

We are salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt 5:13-16). By our influence, example and testimony we hold back evil and promote righteousness into the world. The church does not take up arms to enforce righteousness. The church is not a political organization. Ours is a spiritual warfare and we use spiritual weapons (2 Co 10:3-5). We make known God's requirements and the need for a Savior. The church is the custodian of His truth (2 Co 5:19; Gal 2:7; 1 Ti 1:11).

We preach the law and offer the gospel of Christ which provides escape from the penalty of the law (1 Ti 1:8-11; Gal 3:24). We hold forth the Word of life to the world (Phil 2:16) and defend the truth of the Bible (Jude 3). We pray for secular government and leaders (1 Ti 2:1-3; cf. Jas 5:16). We expose evil (Eph 5:11).

The church must be careful to live the message that is preached. If we lose our testimony and spiritual power, then we lose effective influence - we become like salt which has lost its power and a light over which is a basket.

In practical terms, to influence the public secular sphere, we set the Christian example, teach the people biblical values, and then send them into the market place to live out godly lives. We establish biblical values and do good works. The government, to introduce a related subject, is to enforce law and order, ensure religious freedom, pass laws on the civil issues, and provide an environment favorable to religion.

H. THE CHURCH PROMOTES ALL THAT IS GOOD.

The church supports causes that advance the welfare of the community. This involves social, economic, political and education causes. Paul said: *"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith"* (Gal 6:10). We are to be zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:14), realizing it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

The church, however, is not to proclaim the social gospel. We must keep our priorities correct. To use the example of Jesus, He ministered to physical and material needs, but the spiritual welfare and realities were uppermost in His ministry. Our main mission is to preach the gospel of Christ, win people to Christ, and teach them the Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mankind is lost and dead in sin and headed for an eternal hell. The only hope is to personally receive Jesus Christ as Savior. He died for our sin to pay its penalty and rose from the dead to give us eternal life. We receive this gift by faith alone. Evangelism is primary in the mission of the church.

One man gives an excellent description: "We should devote ourselves to social service on the same principle on which a man picks up sharp nails that he finds in the street on the way to his work. It is one thing for him to devote his entire life to ridding the streets of nails, and another to remove such nails as he can without interfering with his main task." All our good works need to testify to Christ and bring glory to Him: *"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Co 10:31).

I. THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

We are not to love the world (1 Jo 2:15-17). The church will never convert the world, which in fact hates the church (John 15:18-19). The world lies under the command

and power of Satan (Matt 4:8, 9; 1 Jo 5:19). We must recognize the fact that the evangelical church will never rise to a place of world prestige and admiration:

"For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness...For consider your calling brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble" (1 Co 1:18, 22, 23).

By the same token, the evangelical church will never be defeated: *"upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not over power it" (Matt 16:18).* We must remain encouraged and optimistic.

Christians have been chosen out of this world (John 15:19), and have been sent as ambassadors to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Co 5:20) that God's elect may be saved. We also are to be a preserving influence in the world and as such God will be glorified (Matt 5:13-16). Paul told us, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Our perspective needs to be clear regarding our place and purpose in the world in which we live. The world considers Christians as losers, but God has proclaimed us as winners.

J. THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE IN THE CHURCH.

The Bible is the major means used by the Holy Spirit for evangelism, to edify, purify, nourish and extend the church. Paul explains that the church is purified *by, "washing of water with the word"* (Eph 5:26). Peter said: *"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation"* (1 Pe 2:2). Jesus said to the Father: *"Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). Paul said: *"all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord...So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing...I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up" – underlines mine* (Acts 19:10, 20; 20:32).

Paul, in commending the Thessalonians, stated how the gospel spread, *"You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation... For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you" (1 Th 1:6, 8).* Again Paul said: *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ"-underlines mine* (Rom 10:17).

Along with the Bible, our most powerful weapon in spiritual work is prayer: *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as fought to speak" (Eph 6:18-20).*

It is important to plan carefully, create programs wisely, train people adequately, lead and manage effectively, raise the finances sufficiently, go to the unsaved boldly and follow-up - conserving the spiritual results. In all of this, however, we keep the Bible central and

prayer uppermost, following the leading of the Holy Spirit and depending upon His enabling power.

So far we have studied the definition of the church, along her Divine Purpose, and the God appointed function. From here I will focus on the biblical base for the officers of the church as well as their duties.

IV. THE OFFICES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE OFFICES.

In this section I will briefly describe the offices and officers of the early church as described in the New Testament. Some of the areas are controversial, and to those places I will attempt to give all relevant positions. There are seven offices in the New Testament church. Let me turn to them.

1. First, we examine the office of Apostle. This term is first applied only to the 12 chosen by Jesus and includes Paul. It also had a wider application to others who assisted the original. The Apostles had the unique function of establishing the church: *"having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets...as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit"* (Eph 2:20; 3:5). There were special qualifications for the original Apostles:

- They were chosen directly by Christ or the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Gal 1:1).
- They were eye witnesses to Christ and His resurrection (John 15:27; Acts 1:21; 2 Co 9:1).
- They were aware of Spirit inspiration in their teachings (Acts 15:28; 1 Co 2:13; 1 Th 4:8; 1 Jo 5:9-12).
- They could perform miracles to ratify their message (2 Co 12:12; Heb 2:4).
- The evident blessings of divine approval was upon their work (1 Co 9:1, 2; 2 Co 3:2, 3; Gal 2:8).

Since no living person today can fit all these qualifications, then the office of Apostle has passed from the scene.

However, there are those fine Christians who believe the office of Apostle is still with us today. Certainly, the qualifications of the original twelve cannot be duplicated; however, there could have been a second layer of itinerant preachers who traveled from church to church. The word apostle simply means ones who are sent. Some believe this class of apostles is still with us.

2. Second, there is the office of prophet (Acts 11:28; 13:1, 2; 15:32; 1 Co 12:10; 13:2; 14:3; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; 1 Ti 1:18; 4:14; Rev 11:6). The prophetic office is two-fold: that of preaching clearly and boldly the Word of God for church edification, and secondly, to predict future events. The first function of the prophet is still within the church while the second is not (cf. Rev 22:18, 19). Some believe the office of prophet is not with us because it is listed as a foundational office along with the Apostle (Eph 2:20; 3:5). Since the foundation of the church was put in place, the belief goes, the foundation makers are

no longer needed. Other Christians disagree.

3. Third, we have the evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Ti 4:5). Philip, Mark, Timothy and Titus were evangelists. Evangelists plant churches, go as missionaries, do soul-winning, train, mobilize and motivate the church to witness for Christ. Usually they are ordained ministers.

4. Fourth, there are ordained pastors. They have a more settled ministry. Pastors may also be missionaries or church planters. They have spiritual oversight, administer the ordinances and preside as officer at the meetings of the local church. We will return to this group later with more detail.

5. Fifth, there are teacher (Eph 4:11; 1 Ti 5:17; Heb 13:7; 2 Ti 2:2; Titus 1:9; Jas 3:1). The role of Bible teaching involves the pastor of a local church, but there is a special role for teachers such as an itinerant Bible teacher, radio or T.V. teaching or in a Bible college or seminary. They normally are ordained pastors and teach Bible, theology and related subjects. They also may be missionaries.

I summarize the three offices of Eph 4:11ff. For the evangelists, pastors and teachers, they are to equip Christians for the work of service. The goal of service is the growth (both in numbers and maturity) of the body of Christ, the church. The evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves gifted people who are given as "gifts" to the church universal. Spiritual gifts given to individuals are not in view in this text.

The pastor has a more settled ministry whereas the evangelist and Bible teacher may be itinerant (Acts 8:5, 6; cf. 21:8) or settled such as a teacher in a Bible college or seminary (Acts 19:9, 10). In larger local churches all three may be employed on the church staff.

Another application is that these three offices point to the major functions that should occur in any local church: pastoral care, leadership, evangelism, and Christian education.

Evangelists engage in both personal and mass evangelism or, in teaching (equipping) Christians to evangelize. Missionaries may be any of the three. Church planters are specially gifted pastors or evangelists, or the "entrepreneur" type. Many times one person may be assigned by God to all three of these positions at different times in the servant's life.

6. Sixth, there are deacons (Phil 1:1; 1 Ti 3:8,10,12; cf. Acts 11:29; Rom 12:7; 2 Co 8:4; 9:1,12,13; Rev 2:19). Most think the diaconate started in Acts 6:1-6. The word deacon does not appear there, but the function and qualifications are similar to 1 Ti 3:8ff. The word means servant or serving and came to refer to those who were engaged in works of mercy and charity. More will be said later.

7. Seventh, we have the deaconesses. Phoebe from the church at Chenchrea is

called a deaconess, thus the office existed in the early church (Rom 16:1, cf. v. 12). Possibly 1 Ti 3:11 and Phil 4:3 refer to deaconesses.

The office of deaconess, which existed in the early Church, has in its modern form been developed into a helpful agency in the Church's work of mercy. To a large extent deaconesses have found a place in hospitals; but they have also proved themselves valuable assistants to the pastors in congregational work, when assigned to that task.

Deaconesses have great opportunity in evangelistic work among women and children, and as Bible women who go door to door distributing Christian literature and Bibles.

These, then are the seven offices listed in the New Testament. From here I turn to a more detailed explanation of what is a pastor.

B. THE OFFICE OF ELDER, BISHOP, OR PASTOR.

The different titles, Elder, Bishop, and pastor are used interchangeable in the New Testament church. They all refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Ti 3:1; 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pe 5:1, 2).

In Ephesus, for example, Paul called the “**elders**” of the church (Acts 20:17), and said to them, “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** (bishops), to **shepherd** (pastor) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

The term “elder” means literally an aged person, and probably means mature in the faith. Bishop refers to the function of oversight, or administration and leadership, while “pastor” refers to the function of caring for the flock (Eph 4:11). The officers were to lead (Rom 12:8; 1 Th 5:12; Heb 13:7, 17, 24), and administer (1 Co 12:28). The leaders were to provide, govern, lead, protect and care for the church.

The word "elder" developed into the name of an office. In ancient nations and tribes the older men were accepted as rulers. The term gradually came to designate a group of rulers regardless of age.

In the New Testament the word is used of a ruling office (Acts 4:8; 14:23). Elders for the church did not evolve directly from Israel to the church. The title simply refers to ruler, such as the word president can refer to the president of a nation, school or church.

Qualifications of the pastor.

I now turn to the issue of the qualification of a pastor. The qualifications of elders are quite specific, and I introduce them below (1 Ti 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

1. First, his way of life must be excellent: blameless, of good behavior, orderly, righteous, holy. This does not mean they are perfect, but are living a life consistent with Christian qualities and principles. This is to show up in the man's reputation to the world. A bad reputation in the eyes of the unsaved is very damaging to the church.
2. Second, his temperament should be patient, gentle, self-controlled, not one quick to anger, fighting, or self-willed.
3. Third, the man should not be given to wine, or a drunkard, a lover of money, seeking unfair gains over others, nor abuse the office for financial gains. He must be given to hospitality, and good.
4. Fourth, the elder should have good family relations. He needs to be a "one-woman-man," not a womanizer. He needs to rule his own house well, with obedient children, not accused of riotous living. One's family need not be perfect, because no family is perfect. Many pastors have children who stray from the Lord. If your family is not living for the Lord, then stay in the ministry and pray for your loved ones.
5. Fifth, the elder should be saved, mature in the faith, settled and holding fast the great fundamental Christian doctrines. He needs to be well grounded in the Bible so that he can keep a church from drifting into apostasy and false teaching.
6. Sixth, he ought to be a man of good judgment, alert, of sound and stable mind, a man who can think a problem through and arrive at a good decision.
7. Seventh, he needs to be a man of ability, able to teach, manage (1 Ti 3:2).
8. Eighth, the elder is to be a man of some maturity and experience, not a novice (1 Ti 3:6). A beginner cannot be entrusted with authority because pride gets in the way.
9. Ninth, there is the qualification of education. Does the New Testament give any basis for requiring educational preparation for the pastorate? Yes, because such qualifications as faith, judgment, ability and experience can be developed by proper education.

There is also the testimony: *"holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teachings, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9; cf. 2 Ti 2:2). In some way, the pastor must be taught the issues of theology and Bible.

Paul also wrote, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth"* (1 Ti 2:15).

The truth of the Bible is one major tool we have as church leaders and pastors, Paul explains,

"You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have

known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Ti 3:14-17).

This is best done at an evangelical Bible school or seminary - or in a training program of some kind. Distance learning is a useful program in countries where there is limited educational opportunities. If you are called as pastor, then get all the training you can wherever and whenever you can. Most of all, know your Bible well.

10. Tenth, the pastor must be faithful to his calling. Paul states, *“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy”* (1 Cor. 4:1, 2).

Faithfulness to the pastoral call can be difficult. Pastors hold high status within the church and community, yet are subject to many discouragements, abuse, and contempt from others.

Temptations befall the pastor. Many times, the pay is little, and the pastor is faced with the reality they are not making enough money to support their family. The temptation is to try to get rich, and their mind switches from ministry to money. An ever present temptation is sexual in nature. The pastor has a place of trust, and the opportunity to minister to very vulnerable woman. The pastor and his wife must make sure that part of their life is taken care of. A third temptation is that of pride. People look up to the pastor. After all, dozens or hundreds of people show up every Sunday to listen to him speak. He can become consumed with pride.

11. Eleven, the elder (pastor) is to be a man. This is a very heated and controversial subject in today's world. If we take the Bible at face value, especially the Pastoral Epistles, one if forced to concede that only a man can be assigned the job of pastor. But, there are arguments that seem to allow women being pastors. Let's look at both sides. First, I give you the reasons some Bible scholars give that would deny women the position of pastor of a local church.

Side one: only men can be pastors:

First, we have the list of qualifications which makes provision for only men,

"It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife...He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)...and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" - underlines mine (1 Ti 3:1-7; cf. Titus

1:6-9).

Second, there is the fact that no woman was ever appointed as a pastor in the New Testament, or as an original Apostle. In fact, there were four loyal, very capable women at the foot of the cross with Jesus - and only one male disciple. Yet, Jesus appointed, only male Apostles when the choice of excellent females was available.

Third, there is the express command that women are not to exercise authority over men, which was a clear statement given right before the specific qualifications of an elder,

"Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived & fell into transgression" (1 Ti 2:11-14).

Paul's appeal here is not to unique historical and cultural problems that required Paul to forbid the office to women, and that applied only to that particular local occasion. The appeal is to the very nature of the order of creation – the creation of men and women.

Fourth, there is the appeal to the order of creation set before us, which states that man is the head of woman,

"But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man and the man is head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ...for a man...is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels" (1 Co 11:3, 7-10).

The argument explains that this teaching of Paul plainly was not a culturally influenced statement by Paul. He appealed to the order of creation. In the business of the church, the woman is no more to be the head of man than man is to be the head of Christ. The Greek word "head" (*kephale*) means superior in rank (Arndt & Gingrich). (cf. also Eph 5:23; 4:15; 1:22; Col 2:10). In this sense it is close to the word *arche* which means ruler (Schlier, in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 1965, Vol. III, p. 678).

There is a second aspect to the meaning of "head" (*kephale*). Not only does it refer to superior in rank, but also carries the notion of the ground and source of being, life, direction, and meaning. One expert authority explains:

"Woman is the reflection of man to the degree that in her created being she points to man, and only with and through him to God. In this relation of man and woman we are dealing with the very foundations of their creaturehood...Not merely as a Christian, nor historically, but ontologically and by nature woman lives of man and for him...(Kephale) implies one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being" (Ibid., p. 679).

Note well, however, that superior in rank refers only to role or function, not to worth, value or access to God. This view is what is most offensive to women. Women are not inferior to men, nor do they have less worth. We have all been assigned different roles in the order of creation. And we also have the holy angels who witness the results of leadership in the local church.

The other side: women can be pastors:

What say those who believe women can be pastors? I want to be fair and balanced on this issue, and not cause undue controversy.

First, there is the statement by Paul, *“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:27, 28).

The claim is that we are all equal in Christ, and therefore, women can also exercise the same authority and function as men. The other side would retort that Paul is speaking to access to salvation and the value or worth of an individual – not to any assigned roles or functions in the church.

Second, there are examples in the Old Testament that show women as leaders and preachers. Women preachers are mentioned in Psalm 68:11. Miriam was a leader in Israel, and Abigail (1 Samuel 25) shows God’s approval of a wife who assumed authority in her family. There were women prophets, such as Miriam, Deborah (Judges 4), and Huldah.

Examples from the New Testament include Priscilla who taught Apollos (Acts 18:26).

A third major argument is that the reason Jesus did not appoint women as leaders is because He was accommodating Himself to the culture of His time. This position would also indicate that Paul, in his instructions to the Corinthians and Timothy, was addressing a local problem that existed only in those churches he was addressing. It was not, the position holds, an absolute principle that holds true for all time and in all cultures.

A fourth argument is that women are just as capable, gifted, and in many cases have more ability, wisdom, and good judgment as do men.

A fifth argument, that is grounded more in Marxism than the Bible or logic, is that historically men have oppressed women in all facets of life – including positions in family, government, business, and the church. For the sake of equality, women should throw off the yoke of oppression and claim their rightful place as leaders.

Finally, a sixth argument is that since all the spiritual gifts were given to both men and women, then women should also be able to hold the office of pastor.

Well, there you have a few arguments on both sides of the question of whether or not women can be pastors. Remember, that whatever side you choose, make sure you can ground it well in the Bible. Also, God is the one with the final answer; it is to our advantage to be on His side. It is not important to be stubborn and right in our own eyes, but rather, to be right according to God.

Now that I have gone through the various qualifications of pastor, let me turn now to a more specific issue: what does a pastor actually do.

C. THE DUTIES OF PASTOR.

1. Administration is one duty. Pastors are to rule the church as overseers (bishop) (Acts 20:28; 1 Ti 5:17; Tit 1:7; cf. Luke 12:42). We are not to rule as a dictator, but by example and moral persuasion (1 Pe 5:2-3). Administration involved leadership and organizing church programs. The pastor is involved in planning his sermon program for the year. He establishes the church calendar which includes the schedule of the ongoing programs, but also the yearly events such as Daily Vacation Bible School for the children, camps, evangelistic service and any Bible conferences.

Be sure to organize Christian service opportunities for the people in your congregation. A company, for example, may have 100 workers. Each worker has a specific job to according to their abilities and talents to reach the objectives of their company. It should be the same thing in a church. If a church has 100 members, then each of them should have an outlet for Christian service so that the Great Commission can be carried out.

2. Pastoral care is a duty. Pastors are to shepherd the church, feeding, looking out and caring for the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe 5:2). This involves knowing the people, their troubles, counseling, being helpful in time of crisis - being genuinely, sincerely interested, concerned and helpful in the lives of others. It is looking out for the best interests for individuals and the flock as a whole, which is to look after the interests of Christ Himself.

When any member is sick, or facing any hardship, the pastor should visit, pray, read Scripture, encourage, and help in any way. Depending on the size of the church, every member should be visited in their home at least twice a year.

The pastor conducts funerals and weddings. This involves getting involved the lives of the afflicted. When a member dies, the pastor needs to visit the bereaved in their home, let them talk of their grief, and suggest things to be said at the funeral. Arrangements need to be made for food and other physical help for the grieving family.

Be sure to have follow up visits after the funeral. It is a wonderful time to spread good will and the gospel to the community, and to form relationships with other family and friends of the family. Evangelistic opportunities present themselves.

Love your people, love God, love your Bible, love prayer, love lost sinners, love your calling – and you will be a success. Be patient with your people. They are all at different levels in their spiritual walk with God. Some are immature; some are mature. Meet them at your level, and then lead them into a deeper walk with God and expressing their gifts in Christian service.

3. Education is another duty. Pastors are to teach the church (1 Ti 3:2), laboring hard in the Word and doctrine (1 Ti 5:17). The teaching includes correction, exhortation, encouragement (Titus 1:9). Jesus said to Peter, "*Tend My lambs... Shepherd My sheep... Tend My sheep*" (John 21:15, 16, 17). To pastor is to feed, and to feed is to teach. The pastor organizes Bible teaching groups, Sunday schools, recommends literature,

and teaches life related Bible sermons. It is a balance to preach doctrine and practical living. Teach doctrine, certainly, but show how it relates to the lives of the people.

In the teaching program, make sure you teach the whole Bible, and not focus only on a narrow cause. Paul wrote, *“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God”* (Acts 20:27). Remember, you are to inform the people, but also to motivate, inspire, encourage, and challenge the people.

Remember to pass it on. By this I mean to consider it your strategy to, *“And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also”* (1 Timothy 2:2). Don't do all the teaching, but multiply your ministry by teaching others who will teach even others.

4. Officiating is a duty. Pastors are to preside and lead in the functions of the church. James said *“Let him call for the elders of the church”* (Jas 5:14), which suggests a proper procedure in the observance of the ordinances and worship of the church.

There are exceptions, but the pastor should do the baptisms of new converts. He is the public official of the church. It is the same with communion. Let the pastor lead in the distribution of elements. The pastor organizes and leads in the public services of the church. The pastor does not do all the work, but they organize and get the work done through other people.

5. Representing the church is a duty. Paul called for a meeting with the "elders" (Acts 20:17) when he desired to communicate with the church at Ephesus. The pastor is the public face of the local church. He is the leader. If there are public events that require the church to be represented, then that task falls to the pastor. He is the leader. Represent you church well.

There may be public events that would require a pastor to represent his church. For example, the opening of parliament may offer opportunity for the pastor to give the invocation. An ordained minister has influence in the community. Use it well, and to the glory of God.

6. Soul winning is a duty. The pastor has many opportunities to win people to Christ. He is the leader in setting the example by personal soul winning, and leading the church in that high calling. Devise a program to train, organize, and motivate your people to evangelize. Support missions.

7. Maintaining your spiritual health is a duty. By this I mean that the pastor himself must maintain solid spiritual, mental, and physical health. It is easy to spend so much time ministering to others that pastors neglect to be ministered to. Don't take short cuts and diminish your pray life and personal Bible devotions. Just take the time to deepen your relationship with Christ. It will show up in your ministry.

Read books, listen to sermons, go to conferences to keep yourself inspired, motivated,

encouraged, and keep your mind in the Bible. People come to you weary, tired, discouraged, and want to hear something positive from the Bible. Study your Bible and stay close to God so you will have something to feed the weary of heart. The best way to motivate your people is to be motivated yourself. Act with boldness and confidence in the things of Christ.

8. Consider the nature of your calling. Paul wrote regarding our calling, *“for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher”* (2 Timothy 1:11). Paul expanded on this concept,

“What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor 3:5-9).

Several principles we can observe from this Sacred Scripture.

- We are appointed as God’s servants. Servants serve at the Master’s calling and pleasure.
- Masters (God) gives opportunity to each of us.
- God assigns each their areas of responsibility.
- Human effort is required.
- God grants success and results
- God rewards servants based on the effort and quality of their work (cf. vss. 8, 13).
- Team effort is required – everyone has their part.

D. THE DIGNITY OF THE OFFICE

The dignity of this office is great as well as the responsibility and rewards. As to dignity, our Lord is called a "bishop" (1 Pe 2:25). Peter was named a "fellow-elder" (1 Pe 5:1), John was an "elder" (2 Jo 2), the church was exhorted to recognize the dignity of the office (1 Th 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17, 24).

The person who qualifies for this high office and is faithful to its duties deserves much respect. If he does not qualify, he has no right to the office. You have been called by God for a very special ministry with great honor and blessing. We need to take our calling seriously.

Paul wrote, *“It is a trustworthy statement; if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do”* (1 Ti 3:1). Again, Paul reflects his attitude, *“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service”* (1 Ti 1:12).

Paul was thankful, and recognized that it was Christ who called him and gave Paul the ministry he faithfully carried out.

As to responsibility, the elder is "the steward of God" (Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Co 4:1-2). Men sometimes seek the respect of the office but do not understand or desire to shoulder the responsibility.

As to reward, there will be increased authority (Luke 12:43-44) and an eternal crown of glory (1 Pe 5:1-4). Not for all Christians, this is the special reward for the elder who has been faithful to his obligations.

From here, let me turn to another office in the church, the deacons.

E. THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

The Greek term for deacon is "diakonos" (cf. Eph 3:7; Matt 23:11; John 2:5; Phil 1:1; 1 Ti 3:8, 12). It means "one who serves". It meant service in general, but came to mean a special office of service in the church. The office probably arose as recorded in Acts 6:1-6. There the men are not called deacons but a form of the word is found three times in this passage, and certainly the idea of deacon is carried in this section of Scripture.

Deacons are the liaison between the pastor and congregation in both the spiritual and material welfare of the whole church. The qualification of the deacon is found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13).

1. As to character, they are not to be double-tongued, drunkards, nor greedy.
2. As to faith, they must know the faith and hold it sincerely without reservations.
3. As to family relations they are to be good managers of their homes and be a "one-woman-man."
4. They are to be of good reputation (Acts 6:3).
5. Spiritually, they are to be full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3).
6. As to judgment, they are to be full of wisdom (Acts 6:3).
7. Women are eligible to this office: "*Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things*" (1 Ti 3:11).
8. The duties of the deacon are two-fold. Specifically, they administer the church's help to its own poor (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Ti 3:8).

Generally, they perform any service in the church which would relieve the pastors of burdens that would distract from the spiritual work (Acts 6:2, 4). This does not mean the work is beneath the dignity of the pastor. Pastors need to be among their people, and not cooped up all day in their study.

The business affairs of the church, however, should not interfere with their ministry of the Word, ministry and prayer. The pastor should not be called upon, for example, to mow the grass, sweep the church, write the checks to pay bills, and fix the roof, etc.

Deacons are the helpers and assistants of the elder who serves as pastor and teacher. They should stand behind the pastor and relieve him of burdens. Happy is the church that has such a wonderful group of men and women.

The rewards of deacons are great. Unusual dignity is afforded the office. The Apostles were called by this term (2 Co 3:6). The word is used of angelic service (Matt 4:8-11). It is used of our Lord's ministry (Matt 20:28).

There is special reward (1 Ti 3:13). They will receive a high standing, or reputation, now in the church and finally before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom 4:10). There is also a great boldness in the faith, an inward feeling of assurance which comes from the awareness of work well done. The confidence is in the faith, not self.

V. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

One of the major duties of a pastor is to conduct or administer the ordinances of the church. Sometimes these rites are called Sacraments, The Lord's Supper, or Communion. An ordinance/Sacrament is a religious rite instituted or commanded by Jesus Christ. The word referred to both something set apart as sacred and like a military oath of obedience. It came to be defined as a "visible word" or an "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

The Protestant church recognizes two ordinances: The Lord's Supper, and water Baptism. As to the meaning and power they bestow on the believer, there are three basic views.

First, the Roman Catholic view is that the Sacraments themselves contain the grace they signify, and actually convey the grace apart from the faith of the receiver. In other words, they literally transfer power to the recipient. Baptism, for example, has the power to confer salvation. It is how people become a Christian. It is the actual and literal vehicle by which salvation is brought to an individual, but it must be administered by the authorized agents of the church. The Lord's Supper is also a vehicle that transfers power (grace) to aid in remaining in salvation

Second, there is the view that the Sacraments function as visible seals that represent and pledge God's faithfulness in bestowing the blessings. A seal is like an official seal on a legal document. Its presence gives confidence that the document is genuine. It means that Christ is present in a special way, but not literally as the actual blood and body of Christ. This view is held by Presbyterian and Lutheran churches. They believe there is more to the Ordinances than just being symbolic. They would also practice in infant baptism and modes of baptizing other than immersion.

They believe that infants can be baptized, but since they cannot believe, then there is a second part which they call "confirmation." This is done after the person has reached the age of accountability, and "confirms" the original act.

Third, there is the view that the Sacraments are purely visible, and only symbolic signs that represent in action the blessings symbolized. Any power from them is only the result of the moral influence impacting upon the mind of the receiver. This view is that the Ordinances are merely a simple memorial that commemorates something that has already been accomplished. It is a sermon in action. It is like celebrating the Fourth of

July in America, or Christmas. This view is held by independent, Bible churches, and Baptists.

A central Scripture would be,

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.’ In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

As a sermon in action, this view holds, participants proclaim in the Lord’s Supper:

1. The Lord’s death, birth and resurrection.
2. The Lord’s return in the future.
3. Our spiritual union with Christ and other believers.
4. The love of Christ.
5. The assurance of His promises.
6. The assurance of possession of His riches toward believers.
7. It is our personal profession and acceptance of His forgiveness.
8. It is an expression of our thanksgiving and gratitude.

The ordinance of Baptism comes from the Lord Jesus, who said, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).*

In the culture of that day, baptism was an initiation rite that indicated identification with a people or group with similar beliefs. It was used by many religions of the day. Christian baptism then meant that one was identifying with Jesus Christ.

This view believes the design of baptism is basically spiritual. It signifies externally that inward spiritual experience of the new birth by faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism does not bring about the experience, it simply testifies in an external way to what has already happened internally. Water baptism symbolizes five spiritual relationships and experiences.

1. A change of heart (Acts 16:31; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
2. A confession of faith (Romans 10:9, 10).
3. A consecration to God (Rom 12:1, 2; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:14-17).
4. A commemoration of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20; 3:27; Rom 6:11; Phil 1:21).
5. A coming into the local church (Acts 2:41).

As to the mode of baptism, the New Testament pattern is by full immersion in water, and that is the literal meaning of the Greek word, “Baptizo.”

The subjects for baptism are those rationally and morally accountable and old enough to exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ. The gospel is always offered to individuals who are morally responsible (cf. Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:31; Mark 16:16). This position holds to “believers baptism,” and rejects infant baptism, because infants are not old enough to believe on Christ for salvation.

How the Lord’s Supper and Baptism is carried out varies. I present here a pattern that can be used. It is only an illustration. It follows the preaching of the sermon. The elements of wine (or grape juice) and broken bread or wafers are already in the front on trays, and are under a cloth covering.

1. Transition from the service to Communion. The pastor may give some remarks and explanations. The invitation is for all believers in Christ to partake, and to refuse the elements if they are not Christians. It is good to allow time for people to confess sins they might be committing – but not necessarily in public. Let everyone simply bow their heads and quietly confess to God, and get right with Him. Remind the people to hold the elements until the pastor give the signal for all to partake at one time.
2. Request the helpers to come forward. They remove the covering.
3. The pastor prays over the elements.
4. The pastor hands the elements to the helpers who in turn pass out to the seated congregation.
5. The helpers return, serve the pastor who remains at the head of the congregation, then hand the element tray to the pastor. The helpers move to the side of the pastor.
6. The pastor serves the helpers.
7. The pastor reads the appropriate Scripture, and leads in taking first the broken bread, then prays and partakes of the wine or juice.
8. Finally, the pastor prays and dismisses the congregation.

Another variation of the service is to have the helpers stand at the side of the pastor with the elements. People get in line, and take turns taking the elements as they are served by the standing helpers.

As to a baptism, the pastor may want to give a few remarks or a short sermonette. The new convert then walks down into the water. The pastor can ask if the person has received Christ as their Savior. A declaration may be made by the pastor such as, “name...based on your profession of faith in Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The dipping of the convert is up to local tradition, but should involve getting the convert entirely under water, and quickly raising them up again. It is to symbolize the person identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

VI. WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS.

Another part of a pastor’s practical duties is to conduct weddings and funerals. It is best to conduct these acts according to local customs and traditions, but with a Christian emphasis to them. Both events offer opportunities for evangelism. There will be many family and friends there who do not know Christ, or even heard the gospel.

As a practical note, for a funeral, if the deceased is not a Christian, don’t declare that they

are in hell. At the same time, don't declare they are in heaven, which might give false hope to some in the audience.

As soon as you hear of a death, go to the family and offer any help. Pray with them, and read Scripture. Some good selection would be Psalm 23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-6; Psalm 90:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:1-19).

A funeral service might be organized as follows. Try to keep the time to less than an hour. The following is only a suggestion.

1. Have constant, soft Christian music play for five or ten minutes before the service starts. It would be good to meet with the family and pray with them. Be sure to greet all the people who are there in attendance.
2. Stop the music and begin the introduction. Say something like, "We are here to observe the passing away of our dear friend and loved one (their name). It is a time to honor and respect the life of the person, and their family. It is a time of closure, and a time of reconnecting with friends and family.
3. Read the obituary.
4. Read the selected Scripture portion.
5. Pray. Here is a suggestion: "Heavenly Father, Thou who hast been our dwelling place in all generations, we come to thee in this our moment of grief and sorrow. We are reminded in thy word that thou are the one who only can provide comfort, strength, and shelter in a time like this through faith in Jesus Christ. We are thankful for the words of our precious Savior when He said, 'Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' May each one who remains to mourn find comfort, consolation and sustaining grace through Him who is the victor over sin and death and who is the giver of life eternal to those who believe. Minister I pray to the needs of each bereaved heart according to thy wisdom love, mercy, and grace. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen."
6. Read a poem or the eulogy, etc.
7. Have a favorite Christian hymn played or sung.
8. Give a short message – maybe 20 minutes.
9. Have another favorite Christian hymn played or sung.
10. Have a closing prayer, such as, "Our heavenly father, we pray that these words from thy holy word may speak with new earnestness to our hearts. Teach us anew the brevity of life and that death is no respecter of persons. Instruct us in thy ways that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom and thus be prepared to meet thee when death visits us. Direct our hearts to Thee who is the satisfier of every needy heart, through Jesus Christ they only Savior, Amen."
11. Give any announcements that need to be made. Stand at the door, and thank everyone for coming. Shake hands.

Summary:

With this, then, I finish this brief examination of the role of pastor in the local church. We have covered the definition of the church, put forth the Divine Purpose of the church, and then described the function of the church. With this background, the next step was to examine the biblical base for the officers of

the church as well as their specific duties. Finally, I examined the ordinances of the church, and made suggestions regarding weddings and funerals.