

A Biblical Church – Part 4: Biblical Church Leadership & Structure Acts 20:17-32

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:17–32

Paul calls the elders of the local church at Ephesus—not a board, not a headquarters. He weeps with them, exhorts them, and reminds them that they are the guardians of God’s flock, purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. This is what church leadership is supposed to look like: **personal, local, accountable, and spiritual**.

Introduction: The Rise of the Corporate Church

The modern church has swapped the shepherd’s staff for a CEO’s title. We now have **networks, campuses, and franchise ministries** that stretch from state to state—all under the illusion of “one pastor” overseeing it all.

But if the **Good Shepherd** is our example, then **real pastors must be among real sheep**—not preaching from a screen, not ruling from a distance.

""**Matthew 16:18**

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.""

Jesus builds **His** church—not a denomination, not a brand, and not a personality cult. And He builds it His way.

I. Local Pastors, Not Remote Rulers

""**1 Peter 5:2-3**

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.""

The words “among you” are critical.

A true pastor:

- Knows his people
- Feels their struggles

- Guards their souls with tears and truth (Acts 20:31)

You can't **lead people spiritually** if you don't **live among them physically**.

""**Acts 20:28**

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.""

A pastor is a man chosen by God to care for a church like a shepherd cares for his sheep.

He teaches the Bible, prays for the people, helps them grow in their faith, and protects them from false teaching. A real pastor loves Jesus and leads by example.

These pastors in the Bible didn't Skype their sermons. They **bled with the flock** and **stood between them and the wolves**. True pastors suffer with their people. They don't lead from a distance – they're right in the middle of the spiritual battle. When the church is hurting, they hurt too. When the sheep are attacked, they bleed right alongside them.

A pastor weeps, suffers, and labors with the people. The pastor puts his own life on the line for the people. A real pastor isn't just preaching in the pulpit. He's in the trenches with his people. He's not eating steak and lobster at Black Angus Steakhouse while his people are out there suffering.

Jesus said:

""**John 10:11-15**

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.""

Pastors are supposed to do their absolute best to be like Jesus. Not a hireling doing it for the money. Not putting money first. Not making decisions so they make more money while breaking the words of the Bible.

"But he that is an hireling seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep."

Today's remote-control pastors are hirelings—building empires, not churches. Some will start churches and name a man a local leader who isn't a pastor just to get the offering money of several families.

II. Each Church Must Have Its Own Pastor

""**Titus 1:6**

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.""

Paul didn't say, "Put one bishop over all of Crete."

He said, **put a pastor in every church**—because each flock needs its own shepherd. Without a qualified pastor there with his people, you don't have a shepherd looking over the flock. There is no ordained leader there – the flock will be scattered and lost.

""**Acts 14:23**

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.""

Every church—not every region. Notice again: The Bible says, "They had ordained them elders in EVERY CHURCH." Every individual church had ordained elders in them.

This isn't denominational coverage. It's **local pastoral care**.

- A church with no pastor is vulnerable.
- A church ruled from afar is unbiblical.
- A church submitting to a "sending pastor" is dangerously close to papal structure – the Catholic church. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

One man cannot pastor ten churches—but **one church can have multiple pastors**, if they all meet the qualifications and serve together humbly.

""**1 Timothy 5:17-18**

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.""

Plural pastors are biblical—but only within **one body, one flock, one location**. Again, not one pastor over many different churches in many different locations. You don't see that in the Bible once because it makes absolutely zero sense.

III. Elders Within One Church Are Biblical

""**Acts 20:17**

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.""

This one local church had **multiple elders**. Why? Because the **burden was great**, and the work demanded it.

But all of them:

- Served **together**
- Served **in one church**
- Were accountable to **that flock, not many flocks**

There is **zero precedent** in Scripture for one man to claim leadership over churches he is **not present in**. How can a man watch over the people when he isn't there.

""**Hebrews 13:17**

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.""

You can't watch for souls **on livestream**.

One multi-church pastor I know preached that we live in a new day and age so he can effectively pastor many churches at once over the phone. He sounds like a liberal pastor who thinks God's words change based on the times we're living in. God's words don't change.

Don't break God's words for your personal gain and be greedy of filthy lucre. That's gain in money or good or profits in an evil way. When you break God's design, this is evil. When you do evil to gain more money, this is filthy lucre.

IV. The Misuse of "Evangelist" as a Leadership Loophole

""**Ephesians 4:11**

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;""

Evangelist is a gift—a calling—not an office. All of the things listed here on this list are not offices in the church. We don't ordain teachers into the teacher office of the church. We don't ordain apostles. We don't ordain prophets.

So don't attempt to use this Scripture to say this proves there is the office of evangelist. That's deceptive.

""**2 Timothy 4:5**

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.""

Paul didn't say "hold the office." He said **do the work of an evangelist**. Every pastor should be an evangelist—but not every evangelist is a pastor. Women evangelize or preach the Gospel or spread the word as well outside of this church. They don't preach up here. But they evangelize.

""**Acts 21:8-9**

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.""

He wasn't promoted—he was a **deacon** faithfully doing Gospel work. He was doing the work of an evangelist or one who spreads the Gospel.

Some fake pastors will even make up fairy tales and say that Philip was a deacon but his wife passed away so he wasn't qualified to be a deacon so they ordained him as an evangelist. There's only one problem. None of that is in the Bible. NONE OF THAT. Fairy tales. It's the same fake pastor who believes Jesus Christ can be corrupted by Mary Magdalene.

Some men who **aren't qualified** to be pastors are sent to "lead churches" under the title of "evangelist."

That's **unbiblical**. And it will never work out.

If a man isn't qualified according to **1 Timothy 3**, then he has **no business leading a flock**—even if someone gives him a fancy label. If a man has been ordained into the office of evangelist, it's not Biblical and God doesn't see this as Biblical. It doesn't work.

V. Why Local, Biblical Church Leadership Matters

""**1 Timothy 3:15**

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.""

The local church is the **ground of truth**—and if the foundation is messed up, the whole structure falls.

If a church is being led by someone who isn't supposed to be leading, the church will fall. Let me say this again: "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth." You are to do things according to God's way – not your own way.

Here's what happens when leadership goes unbiblical:

1. **Doctrine is compromised** — because men aren't held accountable.
2. **Authority is abused** — because no one knows the people they lead.
3. **Wolves are welcomed** — because no one is watching at the door.
4. **People follow charisma, not Christ** — because the shepherd is absent.

""**Proverbs 30:6**

Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.""

God gave us pastors and deacons—**not popes, not boards, not evangelist-overseers**, not local leaders, not other made up titles, and **not puppet leaders sent by someone else**.

Conclusion: The Shepherd Must Be in the Field

""**1 Peter 5:1-3**

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.""

The pastor isn't above the people. He's **among them**.

The church isn't a product. It's a **body** of believers.

Leadership isn't a ladder. It's a **burden**.

And the only men who can carry that burden are the ones who are **qualified, present, and faithful**.

Don't follow a system. Don't follow a man. Follow the Book.

Fake pastors will look at how someone else did something and just follow their ways. They like to do things that will profit them instead of following the words of the Bible.

""**Acts 14:23**

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.""

One local church. One pastor or pastors. One deacon or deacons. One Bible – the King James Version. One Lord – Jesus Christ.

Let's get back to **biblical structure**, not boardroom strategies for filthy lucre. Don't get mad at someone telling you the truth either. Start doing it the right way instead of doubling down in your errors. A good man admits he was wrong and fixes things. But, fake pastors double down and keep going.

Just admit it. Fix it. And move on the right way.

Let's pray.