

Church Organization: Four Types of Churches

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Ephesians 4 discuss the great gifts Jesus gave when He ascended to Heaven. We often consider His sending the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, but Paul says in Ephesians 4 that (through the Holy Spirit) Jesus gave five things: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. The first two (Apostles and Prophets, Eph. 2:20) are responsible for establishing the New Testament, the foundation of the church (1 Tim. 3:15). The last three gifts (evangelists, pastors and teachers) are works within the local church. One way of viewing these works as the the local church itself.

The point of this is that we might consider that the two greatest gifts given to believers by God today: the Word of God (the completed Scriptures) and the local church of Christ (the family of believers).

In Titus 1:5 Paul said the following to Titus, an evangelist in Crete: *For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you.* There are several important points to observe here. First, that Titus' work here was his main purpose; second, that lacking elders made these churches out of order, and that what would make this right was appointing (multiple) elders in each city (congregation).

The New Testament reveals that there are four types of churches;

- 1) Scripturally Organized
- 2) Scripturally UnOrganized
- 3) UnScripturally Organized
- 4) UnScripturally UnOrganized

- 1) Scripturally Organized –a church will ALL of the workers of the church qualified and authorized
Elders/Pastors overseeing the church (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-3)

Shepherd the church

A plurality of qualified servants

- Deacons serving the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-3)

Bringing peace to the congregation

Making sure none are overlooked

A plurality of qualified servants

- Evangelists preaching to the church (2 Timothy 4:2-5, 2 Timothy 2:22-26)

Feeding the congregation

Equipping the saints for service

- Teachers instructing others (Acts 13:1, Hebrews 5:12)

Growing the knowledge of the Bible

- 2) Scripturally UnOrganized - a church that does not possess qualified workers, but works to have them

A church WITHOUT qualified servants

Christians (still) doing the work of the church

Understood to be inadequate (and working to correct that imperfection)

- 3) UnScripturally Organized – a church with workers, but they are either not qualified or authorized

A church WITHOUT qualified servants

Men not qualified for their service

Example – elders without faithful children, evangelists who lack patience, etc.

A church with UNAUTHORIZED servants

The clergy system prominent in denominations

Pastors/priests who are ordained by the church, not the Holy Spirit

Archbishops, cardinals, popes, presidents, general assemblies

A church content not to build more servants

A church with qualified workers not working to create more workers

A church with qualified servants not helping more men & women become qualified

4) UnScripturally UnOrganized – a church lacking servants not handling that situation scripturally

A church WITHOUT servants

But with qualified members who could do that work

A church ruled by:

Voting or majority rule as opposed to the Word of God

A church not pursuing total scriptural organization

Not seeking elders, deacons, preachers

Example: content with elders but no deacons, preacher but no elders, etc

Most churches in the New Testament lacked the men as servants. Corinth seems to have had no elder, deacons, or a preacher. None of the seven churches of Asia are addressed to overseers. Philippi had both elders and deacons. Today, most church still are not scripturally organized. This does not mean they are failing at the work of the church, but it should mean that one of their first priorities is to correct what is lacking. It may be that they are years from having men qualified to serve as elders, but they need to make it a constant goal.

Even churches that are scripturally organized need to appreciate that it is a simple step to losing that organization. Churches with two elders are one death (spiritual or physical) away from losing both elders and deacons (of whom there is no example of their service apart from elders). With that in mind, scripturally organized churches needed to constantly work on bringing up men who can continue these works. Whether organized or unorganized we must be CONSTANTLY working to make servants and CONSTANTLY working to keep servants.