

Authority In The Church

(The Organization of The Church Series - #2)

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Review

The Bible speaks of the church (universal) and the church (local).
We recognize differences as to membership, structure, & salvation.

3 Types of Church Organization (**exercise of authority**)

EPISCOPAL (from *episkopos* – overseer, bishop)

Characteristics:

Bishop and Elder are considered distinct offices
Elders function in a local congregation
Bishops have authority over a group of congregations (diocese)
Some groups have still higher levels of authority (archbishops, etc.)

Authority:

Passes from the top down
Positions appointed by peers or those above them

Examples:

Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopal, Methodist

PRESBYTERIAN (from *presbuteros* - elder)

Characteristics:

Elders are chosen by, and oversee local congregation
Ruling elders (govern) and teaching elders (ordained ministers)
Representative elders are elected to a regional body (presbytery)
Presbytery owns all property, ordains ministers, rules congregations
Higher groups (synods, general assemblies) serve as courts of appeal

Authority:

Begins at the bottom, delegated by the congregation to the elders, who rule in a representative government.

Examples:

Presbyterian, Reformed

CONGREGATIONAL

Characteristics:

Leaders (elders and deacons) are chosen by the congregation
Local congregation is independent and self-governing (autonomy)
Congregation owns property, chooses ministers, makes decisions

Authority:

Rests in (and is limited to) the local congregation

Examples:

Baptists, Congregationalists, Christian, churches of Christ

What the Bible Says About Authority

Jesus	is the head of the church	Eph. 1:22,23
Apostles & prophets	gave inspired teaching	Matt. 16:19 John 16:13
	foundation of the church	Eph. 2:20
Teaching	written and passed on	2 Tim. 2:2
New Testament	all essential teaching	2 Tim. 3:16-4:2 Jude 3
Local leaders	a plurality in each church are to be followed & obeyed	Titus 1:5 Heb. 13:7,17

3 Bible Words for Local Leaders

<u>The NT uses</u>	<u>when referring to</u>	<u>it is translated</u>
<i>Presbuteros</i>	age or maturity of the man	presbyter elder
<i>Episkopos</i>	responsibility of oversight	overseer bishop
<i>Poimen</i>	care of the flock (tend, feed, guard)	shepherd pastor

These 3 words are used interchangeably

Acts 20:17,18,28 Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** (presbuteros) of the church. When they arrived, he said to them... Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** (episkopos). Be **shepherds** (poimen) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

1 Peter 5:1-3 To the **elders** among you... Be **shepherds** of God's flock that is under your care, serving as **overseers** – not because you must, but because you are willing... eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.