

South Bay Church Plant Sabbath School

4 – The Organization and Leadership of the Church

Why Does a Church Need Organization?

The grassroots church of Acts 1-4 seemed to be a “perfect” church, for a time. However, it was not to last. Even though it was spiritual, committed, full of fellowship, and growing, it could not survive without something else - organization. The progress from being a “gathering” to becoming an organization with structure and leadership was messy, but necessary.

Why is organization necessary for any group of people? What happens if you don't have organization and leadership?

Acts 5:1-11

What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

Being a new believer was not easy. You would be persecuted, cut off from your family and often left without money or a job. To help these new believers, those who had resources in the new church shared their resources with those who had none. This is the effect of the Holy Spirit on the heart of God's people: “when in the church of today it is seen that by the power of the Spirit the members have taken their affections from the things of the world, and that they are willing to make sacrifices in order that their fellow men may hear the gospel.... It is God who blesses men with property, and He does this that they may be able to give toward the advancement of His cause.” *Acts of the Apostles*, 71, 75.

Why is sacrificial giving necessary for the church? What do many people fear when they give money to a church organization? How would you answer those fears?

As the church grew, it attracted people who wanted to enjoy the benefits of being part of the group, without fully committing themselves or being honest as to their intentions. Why would it be dangerous for a church plant to have people in leadership who are not committed or honest?

Acts 5:12-16

What was attracting people?

How can helping people with their physical problems today be a way to introduce them to Jesus?

How would the growing crowds be a potential problem for this new church? If you were there, what advice would you give Peter?

Acts 5:17-42

Popularity led to persecution, but persecution also led to miracles. Do you think God is still in the business of doing miracles today? Why or why not?

What was the response of the Apostles to being told not to teach (v. 29, 40-42)? Why is obedience so important for Christians? What did their obedience lead them to do? Is this something that you are willing to do for Jesus? Why is it important that leaders lead by example?

Acts 6:1-2

What problem occurred in this early church?

The Hellenists were a group of Greek-speaking Jews. They often had customs influenced by the Roman and Greek areas from which they had come. The original disciples of Jesus were largely from Galilee and spoke Aramaic. So, the complaint was about prejudice and injustice. However, the deeper problem was that there were just too many people for the leaders to meet all the needs.

Acts 6:3-7

What solution did they come up with?

It's interesting that all the names of these "seven" appear to be Hellenistic in origin. It seems that they deliberately chose people for leadership who could relate to the growing number of Hellenistic Jews who needed help. It was a beautiful way of overcoming the perceived prejudice.

What qualities did these new leaders exhibit? Why is it important that we have leaders who understand people's needs and who are deeply spiritual?

The setting up of leaders and a system of organization enabled the church to continue to grow. Now there were two leadership groups: the Twelve Apostles, and the Seven (they are not called deacons in this chapter). This enabled the Apostles to delegate some of their responsibilities to other leaders. At no point is any of this dependent on just one leader – there are always a group of leaders – and now they are learning to empower other leaders to also do ministry.

Why does God need different kinds of leaders, rather than just one person?

Ephesians 4:11-12

Why did God give leaders to the church?

As the church grew, God gave leaders a new task. Rather than doing the work of the ministry themselves, now the purpose of these leaders is to equip every member of the church to do ministry. What would happen if pastors and elders took this role more seriously?

Ephesians 4:13-15

What is the ultimate goal of ministry?

Have you ever stood behind a cutout of a famous person where just your head shows? Perhaps it's a bodybuilder and it makes it look like you have that kind of body! In a way, the church is like that. Except, it's the other way around. The head is impressive – because it's the head of Jesus – and the body looks pathetic, like a 50-pound weakling! The goal of leaders is to help the body look like the head.

What are some areas that you might need to mature in? How can a leader help you?

1 Corinthians 12:20-30

God deliberately put different people in the church so we would learn to work together. Every person will have a part. How can we assign different roles in a church so that everyone has a part to play? What can you do to prevent yourself from getting jealous of someone else's role?

Inspired Counsel on Leadership and Organization

Although they may profess the truth, yet if men pass along day by day with no living connection with God, they will be led to do strange things; decisions will be made not in accordance with the will of God. There is no safety for our leading brethren while they shall go forward according to their own impulses. They will not be yoked up with Christ, and so will not move in harmony with Him. They will be unable to see and realize the wants of the cause, and Satan will move upon them to take positions that will embarrass and hinder.—[Testimonies for the Church 5:423](#).

No man is so high in power and authority but that Satan will assail him with temptation. And the more responsible the position a man occupies, the fiercer and more determined are the assaults of the enemy. Let God's servants in every place study His word, looking constantly to Jesus, that they may be changed into His image. The inexhaustible fullness and the all-sufficiency of Christ are at our command if we walk before God in humility and contrition.—[Manuscript 140, 1902](#).

There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself, and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power, which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising; for he who does this despises the voice of God. Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme, are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people.—[Gospel Workers, 443, 444](#).

Men are wanted whose hearts are nerved with holy fervor, men of strong purpose who are not easily moved, who can lay down every selfish interest and give all for the cross and the crown. The cause of present truth is suffering for men who are loyal to a sense of right and duty, whose moral integrity is firm and whose energy is equal to the opening providence of God. Such qualifications as these are of more value than untold wealth invested in the work and cause of God. Energy, moral integrity, and strong purpose for the right are qualities that cannot be supplied with any amount of gold. Men possessing these qualifications will have influence everywhere.—[Testimonies for the Church 3:23](#)

At this time God's cause is in need of men and women who possess rare qualifications and good administrative powers; men and women who will make patient, thorough investigation of the needs of the work in various fields; those who have a large capacity for work; those who possess warm, kind hearts, cool heads, sound sense, and unbiased judgment; those who are sanctified by the Spirit of God, and can fearlessly say, No, or Yea and amen to propositions; those who have strong convictions, clear understanding, and pure, sympathetic hearts; those who practice the words, "All ye are brethren; those who strive to uplift and restore fallen humanity."—[Testimonies for the Church 7:249](#).

To no man has been appointed the work of being a ruler over his fellow men. Every man is to bear his own burden. He may speak words of encouragement, faith, and hope to his fellow-workers; he may help them to bear their special burdens by suggesting to them improved methods of labor; but in no case is he to discourage and enfeeble them, lest the enemy shall obtain an advantage over their minds,—an advantage that in time would react upon himself.—[Manuscript 29, 1907](#)

Every branch of the work of God is to have recognition. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” [Ephesians 4:11, 12](#). This scripture shows that there are to be different workers, different instrumentalities. Each has a different work. No one is required to lay hold of another's work, and, though untrained, try to do it. God has given to each according to his ability. One man may think that his position gives him authority to dictate to other workers, but this is not so. Ignorant of their work, he would enlarge where he should retrench, and retrench where he should enlarge, because he can see only the part of the vineyard where he is working.—[Testimonies for the Church 8:170, 171](#).

Each one is to stand in his lot and in his place, doing his work. Every individual among you must before God do a work for these last days that is great and sacred and grand. Every one must bear his weight of responsibility. The Lord is preparing each one to do his appointed work, and each one is to be respected and honored as a brother chosen of God, and precious in His sight. One man is not to be selected to whom all plans and methods shall be confided, while the others are left out. If this is done, errors will be made; wrong moves will be taken. Harm, rather than good will be done. No one of you needs to be afraid of the other, lest the other shall have the highest place. Without partiality and without hypocrisy each is to be treated. — [Letter 49, 1897](#)

Leading men should place responsibilities upon others, and allow them to plan and devise and execute, so that they may obtain an experience. Give them a word of counsel when necessary, but do not take away the work because you think the brethren are making mistakes. May God pity the cause when one man's mind and one man's plan is followed without question. God would not be honored should such a state of things exist. All our workers must have room to exercise their own judgment and discretion. God has given men talents which He means that they should use. He has given them minds, and He means that they should become thinkers, and do their own thinking and planning, rather than depend upon others to think for them.—[Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 302, 303](#).

As an important factor in the spiritual growth of the new converts the apostles were careful to surround them with the safeguards of gospel order. Churches were duly organized in all places in Lycaonia and Pisidia where there were believers. Officers were appointed in each church, and proper order and system were established for the conduct of all the affairs pertaining to the spiritual welfare of the believers. This was in harmony with the gospel plan of uniting in one body all believers in Christ, and this plan Paul was careful to follow throughout his ministry. The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” [Matthew 18:20](#). *Acts of the Apostles*, 185.