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## Session 3: Our Structure

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“For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace...” 1 Corinthians 14:33

### I. THE NATURE OF A CHURCH DETERMINES ITS STRUCTURE

The structure of the church should not be determined by culture, business practices, or even denominational traditions.

1. The Church is a \_\_\_\_\_.

“They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles, and joined in the fellowship...”  
Acts 2:42 (Ph)

A top priority in a fellowship is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Eph. 4:3

“So let us concentrate on the things that make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together.” Rom. 14:19 (Ph)

ANY attitude that causes disunity is sin.

Col. 3:15, 1 Cor. 1:10, 2 Tim. 2:14, Pr. 17:14, 2 Cor. 13:11, Phil. 1:27, 2:1-3, Col. 2:2, Phil. 4:2, 1 Peter 3:8, 1 Cor. 14:33, John 13:34-35, 2 Tim. 2:23, Rom. 15:5-6, Rom. 12:16-18, Col. 3:13-14, Ps. 133:1

**Implication: A good structure promotes unity and downplays \_\_\_\_\_.**

“(Often)...your meetings do more harm than good because I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you...” 1 Cor. 11:17-18

“Voting” tends to \_\_\_\_\_.

At Covenant Life Fellowship, we only vote on:

- Purchase of land or buildings
- Calling a new senior pastor
- Changes in church constitution & bylaws

2. The Church is a \_\_\_\_\_.

“You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.” 1 Peter 3:8 (LB)

(See also Galatians 6:10, Hebrews 2:10-12, 1 Peter 4:17)

So we operate on the basis of \_\_\_\_\_ not \_\_\_\_\_.

“Don’t reprimand a senior member of the church, appeal to him as a father. Treat the young men as brothers, and the older women as mothers. Treat the younger women as sisters...” 1 Tim. 5:1-2 (Ph)

“(A Pastor) must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his family, how can he take care of God’s church?” 1 Tim. 3:4-5

**3. The Church is a \_\_\_\_\_.**

1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 5:23, Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18, 2:19

We are a body — not a business! We are an organism — not an organization!

Therefore, we function on the basis of \_\_\_\_\_ and calling, not \_\_\_\_\_.

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We each have different gifts according to the grace given us.” Rom. 12:4-6

**In an organization, “maintenance” becomes the focus. But in an organism, “ministry” is the focus.**

At Covenant Life Fellowship we have a simple structure so we can maximize \_\_\_\_\_ and minimize \_\_\_\_\_.

“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for **works of ministry**, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Eph. 4:11-12

Our Structure

- The people are the “\_\_\_\_\_”.
- The pastoral leaders are the “\_\_\_\_\_”.

**4. The Church is a \_\_\_\_\_.**

(Jesus’ favorite description of the church)

John 10:1-30, Matt. 26:31, Matt. 25:33

Therefore, it is cared for and led by \_\_\_\_\_.

“Jesus asked Simon Peter, ‘Do you really love me?’ ‘Yes Lord,’ said Peter. ‘Then take care of my sheep.’” John 21:16-17

4 different terms are used in the New Testament to refer to local church leadership offices:

- Poimen (pastor)
- Presbuteros (elder)
- Episcopos (bishop)
- Diakonos (deacon)

“To the **elders** I say...**Be shepherds** of God’s flock, serving as **overseers**...” 1 Pet. 5:1-2

“Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** 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**. Be **pastors** of the church of God...” Acts 20:17-18, 28

“...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the **bishops** and **deacons**.”  
-Philippians 1:1

**Note:** We also believe in what are referred to as the “5-fold ministry gifts” of Ephesians 4:11-13. These “ascension gifts” (given when Christ ascended) are often operative in the local church leadership as well through traveling ministries. One can “pastor” a church while functioning in the gift of the apostle, prophet, etc. While we clearly recognize such gifts in operation in our local church, we generally put little emphasis on titles, believing that a person’s gifts will be recognized by those who sit under them and do not have to be imposed on people. However, there are times when we feel it is necessary to emphasize the particular office that a minister functions in so that by understanding the uniqueness of the gift, we can more readily receive what is being said. Jesus said, “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward...” (Matthew 10:41)

## II. HOW OUR CHURCH IS STRUCTURED.

### 1. ELDERSHIP.

#### A. Senior Pastors.

- The Senior Pastors are the chief elders of this local assembly.
- Senior pastors are chosen by the congregation.
- They are directly accountable to the regional overseers of Christian International.
- They are the vision bearers and general overseers of the local church.

#### B. Elders.

- Elders are selected by the senior pastors and confirmed by the members.

- Their lives are to be marked by spiritual maturity. See Titus 1:6-9.
- They work with the senior pastors to oversee the spiritual issues of the local church and assist with preaching, teaching and pastoral care.

C. Board of Directors.

- The Board of Directors tends to the legal and business matters of the non-profit organization as required by our bylaws.
- The Board is selected from the Eldership and meets several times each year.

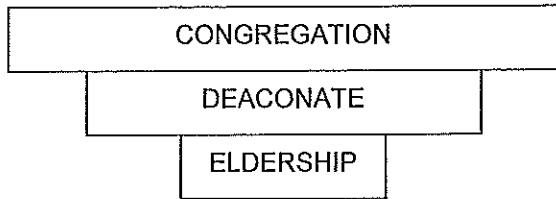
**2. DEACONATE.**

- Deacons and Deaconesses are those who serve the church in various capacities that enable the ministry to flow smoothly. They are a critical factor for success. When the deacons operate in their calling, both the Elders and the members are free to fulfill their roles. See Acts 6:1-7.
- They are to be men and women of spiritual maturity as outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- Their responsibilities include, ushers and greeters, hospitality, caring for the needy, upkeep of the building and grounds, etc.

**3. MEMBERSHIP.**

- The members of Covenant Life are the true ministers. They are those who have entered a covenant relationship with this local church and have made it their spiritual home. Members are expected to be faithful in their attendance, giving, and serving.

**Note:** True spiritual authority operates in true servanthood. Jesus was certainly the greatest in attendance at the Last Supper but it was He who took the servant role and washed the feet of His disciples. See John 13:1-16 and Philippians 2:5-8. Those who have the greatest authority in the church also carry the greatest responsibility to serve. Rather than a pyramid showing the Eldership at the top, we prefer to turn it upside down. The greater the authority, the greater the weight-bearing responsibility of servanthood.



**III. WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER.**

The difference between “attenders” and “members” can be summed up in one word:

\_\_\_\_\_.

At Covenant Life Fellowship we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership for five reasons:

## **1. 5 Reasons for Membership**

### **A. A Biblical Reason.**

"...Christ loved the church, and he gave his life for it." Eph. 5:25

The whole of the Christian life is based on commitment. Christ gave His life to make the church possible. Our response should be to commit ourselves to that which He purchased with His own blood.

### **B. A Cultural Reason.**

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...our country. This attitude has even produced a generation of "church shoppers and hoppers". Membership swims against the current of America's "consumer religion." It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

**C. A Practical Reason:** It defines who can be counted on.

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.

**D. A Personal Reason:** It produces spiritual growth.

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you're not committed to any specific church family.

### **E. A Legal Reason.**

In order to be a legal non-profit organization in the State of Pennsylvania, we must have officers and members. God gives the authority of the government for our protection. We are benefited by being given tax exempt status, ability to perform legal marriages, etc. See Romans 13:1-6.

## **2. What is expected of me as a member?**

At CLF we never ask our members to do more than the Bible clearly teaches. We only expect our members to do what the Bible expects every Christian to do. These responsibilities are as follows.

### **A. Protect the unity of my church.**

- By acting in love toward other members
- By refusing to gossip
- By following the leadership

“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together.” Rom. 15:19 (Ph)

“Live in complete harmony with each other — each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.” Rom 15:5 (LB)

“Have a sincere love for your fellow believers, love one another earnestly with all your hearts.” 1 Peter 1:22 (GN)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...” Eph. 4:29

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.” Heb. 13:17

#### **B. Share in the outreach of my church.**

- By praying for its growth
- By inviting the unchurched to attend
- By warmly welcoming those who visit

“To the church...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.” 1 Thess. 1:2

“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.” Luke 14:23 (LB)

“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.” Rom. 15:7 (LB)

#### **C. Serve the ministry of my church.**

- By discovering my gifts and talents
- By being equipped to serve by my pastors
- By developing a servant’s heart

“Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you...” 1 Peter 4:10 (Ph)

“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Ephesians 4:11-12

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant...” Philipians 2:3-4, 7

#### **D. Support the testimony of my church.**

- By attending faithfully
- By living a godly life

- By giving regularly

“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another.” Heb. 10:25

“But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Phil. 1:27 (Ph)

“Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering.” 1 Cor. 16:2

“A tenth of all you produce is the Lord’s, and it is holy.” Lev. 27:30

