

God is the Owner and God Orders what is what

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.***

There is no power to order, impose their own will, desires, or preferences in a church without a corresponding responsibility, and whence the authority. Who really has the right to dictate in the church? The Pastor? The Deacons? The Elders? The Congregation? To decide and act, none of these is the answer, and all of them at the same time. The will involved is God's will, not our will. God dictates what is what in the local church (and our Christian lives). God decides what is the manner of existing, how it is to function, what are its objectives. **It is the obligation and duty of each member of the church to submit their life and will to the will of God**, that is our "reasonable" (logical) "service" (the way we worship God) **Rom 12:1**.

The conflict and fight for the control of the church is something that is totally carnal. When a person or group pretends to take control of a church, **they are stealing it from God's hands**. The only real solution that gives peace and blessing is God running things. When everybody submits to the control of God by highly seeking God's will there is peace and unity. When is this achieved? **How does God control His church through us?** Of all those groups mentioned, deacons are always serving the desires of the church, and never are governing. There is never a vote as absolute authority, but the will of the people is important.

God should be in Control

1Pet 5:4 *And when **the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*** "Pastor" is an exceptionally good word for who makes the executive decisions for the group. A pastor (of animals) never asks a popular vote of his sheep. **God is our pastor**. He decides what is best for us, and His will is what is best for our life. God has imposed a human pastor to take care of his flock, but under divine supervision. These "pastors" or under shepherds cannot just do what they want to

do, but they have to fulfill the best that they can by discerning as the chief shepherd's will. (This is done through study of God's word, and sorry is the day when pastors cease to become avid students of God's Word.) The word "elder" gives the idea of somebody older with experience and wisdom, through which a pastor can gain wise and valuable advice. Very few times in civil government do true "elders" rule. But they can give wise advice to those that govern. Only a humble pastor that recognizes his own weaknesses and faulty vision will listen and seek the elders' advice. So, the pastor is responsible for and has a measure of authority over the local church, and above all, this is focused on instructing (teaching) and supervising the process of finding and recognizing the will of God.

What the Bible teaches

John 5:30 *I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; **because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.***

If ever God gave the local church an example to follow in their affairs, this is it. The Bible expresses that **God is who runs the church**, and no human being can know that divine will (except Jesus Christ) without divine revelation. **A person can only discern God's will by means of a living, dynamic relationship with God**. Nobody can discern this will of God if they are not clearly saved and energetically walking in God's will themselves. **It is only through years of meditation and Bible study that discernment comes**. One must also have a lot of experience in doing the work of God. This does not mean being a pastor or professional minister but having time and experience in the service of God, understanding what the real work of God is, and complying with God's directions in the matter. In our world, so many think they are doing God's work when it is a social work, or some secondary thing that God has not really authorized to take a priority. The main priority (seeking the salvation of the lost and organizing them into local churches, edifying them) seems lost on many "professional ministers".

The churches of the New Testament used people and methods at the same time to discern the will of God, and they follow that will of God. They arrived at

an understanding of God's will through a process, and this was their passion, to discern and do the will of God.

The Example of Acts 15

In **Acts 15:1-28** we have an example of how they resolved a problem. For the moment, let us not deal with the actual problem, but study only **the process** they used to find a solution.

1. The apostles (missionaries) Paul and Barnabas noticed the problem and tried to resolve it by themselves (**Acts 15:1-2**). They decided it needed more than just their point of view, and the contention grew greater.
2. The missionaries, the 12 apostles, and the elders undertook the matter (**15:2, 4, 6**).
3. At this point, each "side" expounded their "biblical reasons" focusing on what "they believed". The discussion of the problem was examined against the light of Scripture. vs7-11
4. Men of God gave their testimonies (viewpoint, experiences, understanding of their own belief) v12
5. James (as pastor of the church in Jerusalem) expounded Scripture and applied it to the problem. v13-21
6. The apostles and elders "*with the whole church*" were included. Everybody should understand the will of God and God's objectives, and by means of teaching or preaching the exposition of Scriptures, they all arrived at the same unity of understanding. v22
7. **15:23** Even the apostles, elders, and brethren ceded before the logic and authority of Scripture.
8. **Acts 15:28** "*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*".

If we understand that they did not have the whole New Testament at that moment, and that they also had the 12 apostles to which were given divine revelation through their walking with Jesus, then we see some differences for us today. We do not have apostles today, and we do have the whole Bible. But even when apostles were part of all of this, they were not dictators, but only a resource in finding God's will.

The elders of the church together with the pastor, missionaries, and apostles each expounded their

understanding of Scripture, resolving God's will based on the authority of what it says, not what they think particularly.

Apostles and Missionaries

Matthew 10:5 "*These twelve Jesus sent forth*" The concept of "apostle" (αποστολλω) has been twisted, and it is difficult rescue it today. Basically, it means sent with a commission (authority and wherewithal) to accomplish a mission.

The Twelve Apostles were on a mission of testifying (giving eyewitness validity) to the words, events, witnesses, teachings, and acts of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Acts 1:21** assigns a prerequisite of having walked personally with Jesus. Today nobody can occupy the position of these 12 apostles.

There were **Missionary "Apostles"** like Paul (**2Co 8:23**) who were "**messengers**" (literally in Greek the word is "angel" normally, but here it is "apostolos") "**of the churches**". They executed their "mission" of evangelizing and planting new local churches, but even so, they did not have the power nor authority to impose their will as a dictator. Paul could not (would not) impose his will on the Corinthians. They were rebellious and contended about everything it seems. But Paul expounded Scripture in scriptural arguments (logic) to find God's will. We also note that the epistles to the churches were directed to the churches (at large, all the membership) so that the entire congregation understands God's truth and will, and not to the pastor individually in private.

1Tim 5:17 "*the elders that rule well...*" The elders were "ruling" (directing) (προΐστημι **proistemi** to stand before a group, to direct its activities). Strong's defines this as governing, to be in some form over a group. This passage negates the idea that "*nobody rules*" or "*is over God's flock*". Surely the pastor is an elder. In **Acts 11:39-40** and **James 5:14** it is obvious that this group ("elders") governed the church. In **Acts 15:4,6** they reviewed doctrinal matters, and in **Acts 2:42** they continued in the doctrinal and apostle's doctrine, even validating Christian workers (**Acts 6:6**).

Pastor-Bishop. A pastor has this ministry to watch over and make decisions for others, exhorting and

teaching them. He should fulfill the requirements before governing. This office existed in the NT even though many throw animosity and dirt on it today. In **Acts 20:28** Paul exhorted the bishops (overseers) of the church calling them elders in the context (20:17).

The Congregation. In **Acts 15:4** the church received missionaries. **Acts 15:22** "*it pleased the apostles and elders and with the whole church to send chosen men...*" The strong point here, that the congregation governs itself, is in the NT epistles. They both direct their own affairs, and they have leaders that also facilitate that. The idea of the Catholic church or protestant denominations is anti-biblical. There is a strong teaching of the individual priesthood of each believer, and we all have individual direct access to God through Jesus. A NT church must act in unity and harmony with itself. This does not come from a top down imposed human authority, but because all seek to obey God's will "together in unity".

The Biblical Form of Finding God's Will

First, we understand that God has individuals in certain positions in the ministry, and with the revelation of Scripture on specifics, they can guide us to understand the will of God through prayer and sometimes fasting. **Secondly**, nobody has a "corner on the market" when it comes to God's will. The only way to know it is by studying Scripture. Experiences often help, but they cannot impose authority on what Scripture says. But be very wary on ignoring or going against what God give in people with a lot of experience in the ministry. **The convincing of the rest through exposition of Scripture is the heart of getting this right.** To achieve this unity, God governs his church. This is always in love one for another, seeking brotherly harmony. So, decisions must be rooted and grounded in Bible exposition correctly done. **Thirdly**, God uses men who live the principles of God's word, proven over time honored experience in the ministry more than any other individuals. Let me not neglect to mention that experience is linked to a strong personal testimony of obeying God's will of the wise old adviser. There are old people with a lot of experiences that are fools.



Who runs the Local Church?

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We ask the question, who runs the local church? Who should give the orders? When we do this, there are always some people that quickly and passionately answer that question. Some argue that the last word is always given to the congregation, and others affirm that mature brethren should decide. Presbyterians say that an elder board runs the church. Some are sure that it ought to be the pastor. Others even say the deacons or a board of directors. Some believe that it should be a combination of these somehow. It does not matter what people think, the only real solution we can accept is what God has given us in His holy Word. In this tract we examine who really runs the local church, and how that happens. All these options are wrong. Only God should give the orders in the church, and the local church should search for this divine will in their situation.