

Course Outline

Class 1 *Unity*

Class 2 *Church Membership*

Class 3 *Preaching*

Class 4 *Prayer*

Class 5 *Ordinances*

Class 6 *Church Governance*

NEXT:

Class 7 *Church Fellowship*

Class 8 *Discontentment Within the Church*

Class 9 *Church Leadership*

Class 10 *Church Discipline*

Class 11 *Giving and Service*

Class 12 *Corporate Worship*

Class 13 *Evangelism*

LIVING AS A CHURCH



Class 6: Church Governance

Godly Authority Fostering Unity

I. Introduction

- Purpose of class:
 1. To consider the authority structures of the church as set forth in scripture, and how they foster unity within the church.
 2. To consider how we, as members of GRBC, can encourage church leaders and exercise our membership responsibilities.

II. Scriptural Offices of the Church

A. Elders

Four ways that elder leadership promotes unity:

- Places authority in those most qualified to exercise it. Hebrews 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3
- Makes elders responsible for spiritual health of members and accountable to God.

Hebrews 13:17: Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.

- Requires members to obey and humbly submit to authority.

Hebrews 13:17: Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- Establishes a plurality of elders.
Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14

Three points of application:

- Obey your elders and submit to their leadership
- Make the elders' work a joy rather than a burden
- Consider the qualifications of prospective elders

B. Deacons

Three ways deacons unify the church:

- They care for all members of the church. Acts 6.
- They free elders for ministry of the Word and prayer.

Acts 6:2-4: So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

- They distribute work throughout the congregation.

Two points of application:

- Select deacons who foster unity
- Support deacons by volunteering in their ministries

III. Congregationalism

A. *Congregational Authority – five areas.*

- Personal disputes – Matthew 18:15-17
 - Discipline actions – 1 Cor. 5
 - Membership – 2 Cor. 2:6-8
 - Doctrine – Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Tim. 4:3-4
 - Resources -- Acts 4:32-35; 6:1-7
- This authority furthers unity by enabling the congregation to protect the Gospel message.

B. *Balancing Elder Leadership and Congregationalism.*

Question #1 – Over what other areas of decision-making does the congregation have final say?

- Scripture does not clearly identify other areas. This is left to the judgment and discretion of the individual congregation.

Question #2 – How do we obey our leaders and, at the same time, exercise our congregational responsibility.

- The congregation must assert its authority where a matter is serious and the elders' position is clearly contrary to scripture.
- Where the issue is serious but unclear, the congregation should trust the elders.

Three points of application:

- Guard against false teaching in the church
- Take seriously your membership responsibilities
- Exercise judgment when disagreeing with elders