

YESTERDAY'S TOMORROW
Session Nine
Class Leadership Instructions

Introduction Notes

A. The leadership of the Bible

Fellowship Church was a family affair until 1945.

Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church, exercises leadership in particular churches through human leaders whom He calls and equips for service as leaders.

1. A genealogy chart will confuse you.

2. The presiding elders / district superintendents were: William Gehman, W. B. Musselman, C. H. Brunner, H. B. Musselman, W. G. Gehman and B. B. Musselman.

3. Because of the German culture and background, leadership was strong and authoritative.

- a. German culture places great value on loyalty and obedience.
- b. Leaders had dependable, committed, loyal followers who would support their leaders even if they had questions.

B. The leadership structure of the Bible Fellowship Church has changed throughout the years.

1. Three forms of church government have been followed throughout the years.

- a. In congregational government, practiced by many Baptist churches, decisions are made by the congregation.
- b. In hierarchical government, practiced by Methodist and Lutheran churches, authority rests in leaders called bishops who are empowered to make decisions for those under them.
- c. In presbyterian government, practiced by Presbyterian churches, leaders called elders have authority in local churches.

2. The government of Mennonite churches is hard to categorize since they were both congregational and hierarchical.

3. The Evangelical Mennonites recognized three offices.

- a. Elders were authorized overseers like bishops.
- b. Preachers were leaders in the congregation.
- c. Deacons were lay leaders.

4. What is interesting about the Evangelical Mennonites is that they recognized two kinds of call.

- a. One was ecclesiastical, from the church.
- b. The other was divine, coming directly from God.

5. The Bible Fellowship Church has come to the conviction that rule by elder, the presbyterian form, is God's form of government for the church.
 - a. The former form of government took a form like the Methodist Church.
 - i. The leader was called the District Superintendent.
 - ii. Pastors led individual congregations.
 - iii. Organization revolved around a committee called the Official Board.
 - b. During the 1960's, the church underwent a radical change in its thinking and moved to the presbyterian form of government.

Question Notes

2. Be sure that you have looked carefully at these passages and their background. Be sure that you understand what is taught here.
3. The authority of human leaders is the authority to say what Christ has said. Human leaders carry the responsibility to see that what Christ has ordered is implemented in His church.
4. Human leaders are not to be obeyed if their teachings depart from the revealed truth of God's word. Disobedience or rebellion against the leaders of a church is a serious matter and must never be taken lightly.
5. The human leaders of a church do not have unlimited authority to reach into every area of people's lives. It is not the task of elders to "run" the lives of members.
6. You will certainly want to consider the background of 1 Timothy 3 which lays out the spiritual qualifications of elders and deacons. You may also open up the issue of male leadership. The question of spiritual maturity will arise here.
7. This question is an opportunity to talk about how you select your leaders. Perhaps some good ideas to improve your election procedures will come out of this discussion. Be sure to talk about to vote intelligently for leaders.

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HUMAN LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

IX. Of the Election and Office of Teachers, Deacons and Deaconesses in the Church.

As regards offices and elections in the Church, we believe and confess, since the Church cannot subsist in her growth nor remain an edifice without officers and discipline...

And further, that He provided in His Church before His departure with faithful ministers, evangelists, pastors and teachers, whom He had chosen by the Holy Ghost, with prayers and supplications, in order that they might govern the Church, feed His flock, watch over them, defend and provide for them...

And further, respecting deacons, that they particularly when they are capable, being elected and ordained thereto by the Church, for the relief and assistance of the elders, may admonish the members of the Church being appointed thereto, and labor in the Word and Doctrine, assisting one another out of love with the gift received of the Lord... (Articles of Faith, Dortrecht, 1632)

10. Teachers and Ministers in the Church.

We believe and confess that the Church without office and ordinance cannot continue in its growth and culture; that for this reason Christ the Lord himself, as a father in his house, has instituted his offices and ordinances, that he has given commands and injunctions concerning them and has ordained how each one should walk therein, and have regard to his word and calling.

Further, we believe that the calling of Christian Preachers and ministers happens in two ways; the godly and the ecclesiastical. Some without any interposition of man are called of God only, as was the case with the Prophets and Apostles; and some by the interposition of the pious, as may be seen in Acts 1:14[?], Gal. 1:15-16. (Doctrine of Faith, Evangelical Mennonites (1866), from What Mean These Stones, p. 29)

From "Officers, Section 1, Of Officers in General"

Art. 1. The officers of this Society are of three kinds, viz:

First: The office of Elders.

Second: The office of ordinary Preachers, or Teachers.

Third: The office of Overseers or Deacons

(From General Rules, Evangelical Mennonites (1866), from What Mean These Stones?, p. 34).

Form of Government, The Bible Fellowship Church.

Article I: Preliminary Principles

5. That our Lord, the Head of the Church, for the edification of the body and the evangelization of the world, has appointed officers in the visible church to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, and exercise discipline.

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6. That, although the character, qualifications, and authority of church officers are described in the Holy Scriptures, the electing of persons to be office bearers shall rest with the body.

Article III: The Government of the Church

By providing spiritually qualified overseers, called elders, Christ enables each particular church to govern itself.

But although the churches are autonomous, they are not independent, because they are a part of a fellowship of churches. The basis of this fellowship is mutual conviction of the body of truth set forth in the Scriptures...

All authority in the church, whether in particular churches or in the denomination, is moral and spiritual, ministerial and declarative. It is moral and spiritual, negatively, in that the church is unable to use civil force to compel obedience, and positively, in that obedience is incomplete unless it is inward and real as well as outward and apparent. All authority in the church is ministerial and declarative in that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and conduct, and all decisions and laws must therefore be understood as being servants of the Word, announcing what the body believes the Scriptures to teach with the constant recognition that "councils may err" through frailty inseparable from humanity...

Article IV: The Officers of the Church

Having called and assembled His church our Lord provides for the government of each particular church by conveying authority to officers whom He enables. The continuing officers in the church are ministers, ruling elders, and deacons. The endowed man does not create the office, nor does the office clothe the man with power, but the Lord endows the man with gifts and qualifications that enable him to fill the office that God Himself has created (Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church).

QUESTIONS

1. Has our view of human authority and leadership in the church changed through the years? Explain your answer.

2. What do the following passages of Scripture teach about human authority in the church?

-Matthew 16:18-19

-Matthew 18:17-20

-Acts 20:28

-1 Timothy 5:17

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-Hebrews 13:17

3. What is the relationship between the authority of Christ, the Head of the Church, and human leaders of particular churches?
4. Can human leaders, called and appointed to leadership by God, make mistakes? How can a church recognize the authority of its human leaders while at the same time recognize that these leaders are capable of making mistakes?
5. What do you think it means that the authority in a church is "moral and spiritual, ministerial and declarative"?
6. Can anyone be a leader in a church? Explain your answer.
7. How does your church select its elders and deacons? How can you decide who ought to serve in these offices?