

An Approved Church Pursues Organization

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Paul gave Titus the evangelist a command in Titus 1:5 – “you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you”. Paul’s command puts emphasis on the idea that (1) churches without elders are lacking and (2) churches with elders have been set in order. This fits nicely to the purpose of his letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy, when he tells us that the purpose of the letter was similar: “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”. This “writing” had just concluded the process of appointing elders and deacons. Thus, the appointment of elders and deacons was fundamental to the conduct of the local church.

Church organization is part of the nature of an approved church. This is because it is an important matter for all to consider. In Ephesians 4:11 we are told the following: *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.* “He Himself”, Jesus is the head of the universal church (Eph. 1:22) and the apostles and prophets (along with Christ) are the foundation of the universal church (Eph. 2:20). The universal church’s organization (Christ as Head and Foundation, the Apostles and Prophets establishing the New Testament) has been set once and for all (Jude 3).

But those “gifts” to the local church are still being effected. They are evangelists (also called preachers, ministers), pastors (also called elders, overseers, shepherds, or bishops) and teachers. Deacons are included in this, perhaps under the elders, as their appointment and work is related to the elders. This is the structure of the New Testament church. Therefore, churches that are approved seek to set themselves in order.

But it is important to understand that, as with all of the purposes of the church, that the importance is that they are pursuing it, not that they have it. Meaning: an approved church could be a church without elders or deacons or evangelists; but obtaining them is part of their purpose and work. It needs to be understood that a church which is unorganized is lacking what has been given and needing to be set in order.

What does an approved church look like in regards to either seeking or having this order?

1. When the whole body works together (Ephesians 4:11-12)
 - These works are given to the church
 - The workers who fill them do so for all
 - This is a work all of us enable to happen
2. When the elders shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28)
 - Oversight protects the church
 - Shepherds have a great love for the flock (John 10:11)
3. When the evangelist feeds the flock (2 Timothy 4:2)
 - The word we NEED is preached
 - The WHOLE counsel of God is prepared
4. When the deacons manage the flock (Colossians 1:25-26)
 - Deacons manage the business of the church
 - They have been proven trustworthy
 - They see to the purposes of the church

5. When the teachers patiently grow the flock (2 Timothy 2:24-25)
- Teachers working to grow members
 - Using wisdom to convey truth

If this is what a successful, approved church looks like, what does an unapproved church look like?

1. Creating unapproved works in the church
 - Unauthorized works in the church (extra workers, like popes, presidents, regional leaders, etc.)
 - Unauthorized workers in church works (unqualified elders, deacons or evangelists)
2. Not pursuing an organized church (whether already organized or not)
 - Content not to grow these works among members
 - Not pursuing a path to organization
3. Not respecting these works (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17)
 - Disregarding or disrespecting workers and their purposes
 - Not seeing these works as the church itself
 - Not seeing these works as Christ Himself

Conclusions

An approved church is always looking for qualified workers and working to qualify brethren to works. It does not matter if a church already has workers or not. The measure of approval is in the effort. An approved church desires divine workers; meaning, it is the desire of the members to have them and the desire of members to serve in them.

What is your personal purpose in this work? First, you must work to qualify yourself and others for these works. Second, you must esteem these works for the benefit of the church.