

Concerning titles in the church

What title should we have in the church? Actually in the New Testament no one is ever referred to by any titles in the early church at all!

They are introduced with descriptive words like: **a servant of the lord, an apostle, a fellow laborer, a brother, a sister, ect...**

But nowhere are they ever referred to by an official title like Pastor Timothy, Elder Titus, or Bishop Apollo. This leads us to an important question;

Why did the New Testament Church not have titles like Pastor Tim, Elder Paul, Reverend Mike, Bishop Tom ext... and yet they are so prevalent today?

Could it be in the way we have changed the way the church gathers for worship and service, and in the way in which the churches are governed. In the primary structure of most worship services today 1 man will speak on behalf of God through a message, others will sing or share a testimony and the whole thing is decided upon sometimes weeks or months in advance. But is that the way the early church would gather together for worship?

NO! The early worship service and those that we are to have is laid out in detail in 1 Cor. 14.

Take a closer look at **(1Co 14:29-33)**

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged

It is important to note that there are to be two and even three who are to share and that in fact all can prophesy so that all can learn and be encouraged.

This passage and others like it show us that the church is to be lead by the will of the Holy Spirit and not by men. God is able and will speak through any of His children. When we limit our services or Churches to a well organized and predicated schedule we also limit ourselves to being lead by God's Spirit and miss out on opportunities where we all can learn and be encouraged.

Sadly many have fallen into the mentality that worship services are something that we either come to view or come to perform in. These types of service only lend themselves to continue a false belief that that 1 Or 2 people speak for God and the congregation is not or is at best secondary to that of the principal leaders. This falsehood is then carried throughout all other aspects of the ministry of the church. This is not however the model given to us in scripture. We are all to come together to serve in the church as the Holy Spirit will decide what we will do and who He will speak through, or what He will say.

God has given to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers... This list is not a list of offices in the church but rather a partial list of the types of people God has given for the church to grow and to be strong. Let's look at this list for a few minutes.

Ephesians 4:11-17

God provides the church with many types of ministers, what is it that they are to be doing?

How long are they to be busy at the task of equipping the saints of the ministry?

Why does God say that this is so important?

God places many types of ministers in the body but who is it that leads them all.

What does God say will be true when each part of the Body is working properly.

Just like God provides those who care for the Spiritual needs of the Church he also provides those who will serve to meet the physical needs of the church.

Timothy 3:1-7, and *Titus 1:1-16*. In these passages we learn about the nature of overseers and servants of the Lord.

These passages give us the understanding of what kind of conduct they should exhibit in their daily lives. These fruits should be true of all believers.

Although many denominations use these passages to support the idea of a power structure in the church both bishops/overseers and Servants of the Lord were responsible for seeing to the needs of the congregation and did not represent a power structure in the church. They were given the tasks of servants and the handling of administrative needs.

"The noun rendered bishop occurs in [Act 20:28](#); [Phi 1:1](#); [1Ti 3:2](#); [Tit 1:7](#); [1Pe 2:25](#). The verb means, properly, to look upon, behold; to inspect, to look after, see to, take care of; and the noun denotes the office of overseeing, inspecting, or looking to. It is used to denote the care of the sick, compare "Passow;" and is of so general a character that it may denote any office of overseeing, or attending to. There is nothing in the word itself which would limit it to any class or grade of the ministry, and it is, in fact, applied to nearly all the officers of the church in the New Testament, and, indeed, to Christians who did not sustain "any" office." (Barnes)

We have a natural tendency to desire to put ourselves or other people in ranks or levels of importance in the world we live in. We like ranks because they let us know who is in charge or responsible. When something is wrong we want someone that we can go to and they will fix it: the manager, supervisor, owner, and etc. The disciples had the same questions for Jesus. What order or rank do we have in the church? Jesus actually had a lot to say. You can find what He said in **Matt. 18:1-3**, **Matt. 20:20-28**, **Matt. 23:9-13**, and **Mark 9:33-35** to name a few places. Of all the things that Jesus could have taught His followers the night before His crucifixion it is important for us to pay attention to what He considered to be the most important lesson to teach His followers. He again teaches them about what it means to be a Leader in His Kingdom,

"A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is

the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

(Luk 22:24-27)

We are all given different ministries within the Body of Christ. One person is not greater or less than the other. Christ is the only Head in His Body and we are all members, brothers, sisters, and co labors, together with Him. Too often those who desire to be called Pastor, Elder, or Deacon have used their titles as a foothold for pride or a battling ram for their own selfish ambitions leaving behind them a trail of pain and destruction. Let that never be true of us, and if it has been let us repent.

So then what of titles and ranks in the church? It is best then to steer away from titles in the church when it is possible to do so and when it is not we should all be careful to guard our hearts from pride and the temptation to lord over others, for if we do not, we will find ourselves in the refining fires of the Lord. How much better my brothers and sisters it is to be described as a servant of the Lord than any other title we or others may choose to give us.