

# Church Government

Actually the Bible makes it clear that there is only supposed to be one form of government in general, let alone of the church.

Benevolent dictatorship is the Biblical model for government.

For some people, “dictatorship” has some bad connotations, so let’s accept benevolent monarch.

It has the same idea. One person has absolute power, but they are benevolent.

They genuinely have the best interests of everyone else in mind and they rule accordingly.

This is how God rules.

This is how he wanted to rule Israel, but they wanted their own king like the nations around them.

That didn’t work out too well for them.

But what about the church?

It’s the same really.

Yeshua rules the church as benevolent monarch.

The Bible is very clear, that Yeshua alone is the head of the church.

If only it was that easy.

The Bible also talks about Elders and Deacons (and some other titles depending on which English version you read).

But basically, there are two roles.

Biblical Elders are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the congregation (and of themselves...).

They are there to make sure we are taught correctly, and that we are safe and growing to maturity as Christians.

They are our examples and mentors. They care for our wellbeing.

But they are not our kings, or our lords.

Deacon really just means servant. And Biblical Deacons are servants of the congregation.

They are there to make sure that all our physical needs are met.

To make sure we have enough food. That we have chairs to sit on.

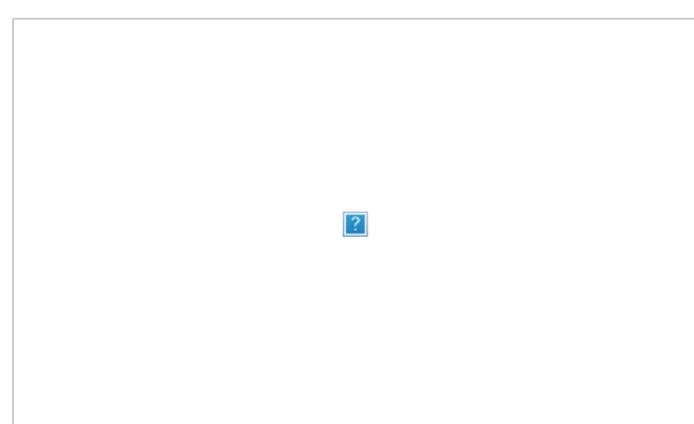
They make sure our money is properly looked after and distributed fairly.

They make sure that our buildings and properties, (if we have any, or even if we rent them) are cared for and looked after.

They do all this practical stuff, so the Elders can focus on prayer and teaching.

They too care for us and love us. But in different ways.

So we end up with this kind of structure:



Yeshua is the head of the church.

The Elders are following him and leading us.

The Deacons are bringing up the rear. They are our support team.

This is the Biblical model for church government and leadership.

So how do Elders and Deacons get the job?

In most churches they are elected.

But democracy has no place in church.

It’s not God’s model for government.

The only thing close to a democratic election of leadership in the Bible seems to be in Acts 1.

But this was before they received the Holy Spirit, and honestly, I think they got it wrong.

And even so, they were elected by chance, not by anyone voting.

In Acts 6 the Apostles (basically in the role of Elders), asked for the names of some spiritually mature men that could effectively become Deacons.

They would be responsible for the practical oversight of the church.

They were not elected. Nobody voted. They were known to be spiritually mature.

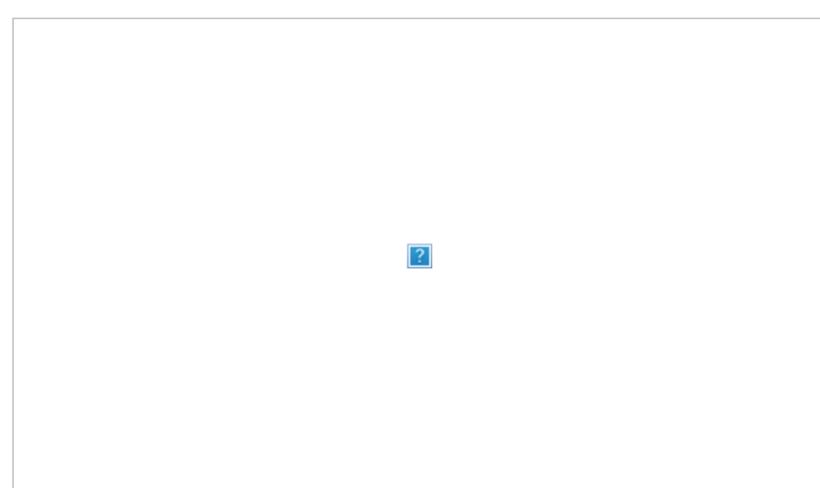
And the “Elders” approved of the choice and appointed them to the task.

After that, Elders were appointed by the Apostles who started each local church. (or by their representatives).

In fact, there is a major problem with democracy in church.

If the church is growing properly then there will be many more young Christians in the church than there are mature Christians.

It will look a bit like this:



The number of people in the white triangle (the mature Christians) will be the same as the number in the green part (the young Christians).

So, in a democracy, the youngest Christians end up running the church.

I’m not saying young Christians are stupid. But making these decisions requires spiritual maturity that they simply do not have yet.

Paulus says that you shouldn’t be an Elder unless your children are already grown up (and turning out well).

He also says that they shouldn’t be recent converts (because it’s too dangerous for them).

The youngest Christians just shouldn’t run the church.

Elders have the responsibility to make the leadership decisions for the church. That’s their job.

They cannot abdicate this role to a vote from the congregation just because the world does it that way.

Just as a father has the responsibility to lead his family (while taking their needs into consideration), so Elders have the responsibility to lead the church.

But they do not have the authority to give that responsibility to someone else.

So, Elders should make decisions themselves.

(Of course they should listen to the congregation, young and mature, and take that into consideration).

So the current Elders should be choosing spiritually mature leaders from the congregation to join them as they come along.

Deacons also need to be spiritually mature Christians.

They will often (but not always) also be teachers and mentors.

But their main tasks in relation to the church will be about practical matters.

Deacons should also be chosen by the Elders.

In Acts 6 the men were proposed by the congregation, but the decision was ratified by the Elders.

They weren’t elected, they were simply put forward as men who were known to be spiritually mature.

The initiation of the whole process and the final decision was done by the Elders.

And there is one more thing that I have seen done badly in so many churches.

A Deacon is not an apprentice Elder.

Deacons are men with gifts for managing practical things.

Elders are men with gifts for teaching, pastoring and spiritual leadership.

I think it would be very rare to find someone who can do both.

A Deacon is not a second class leader, they are very spiritual men who have different gifts to the Elders.

And just because you are a good Deacon does not in any way mean you will be a good Elder (or vice versa).