

# 119

## MINISTRIES

*“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”*

### **The Church: His Model**

As believers, how are we to organize ourselves? Does it matter and should we care? Should we structure ourselves in the way that YHWH designed, or in our own way? What is the Biblical structure of the Body of the Messiah? Should there be a head pastor over a church?

The answers to these questions may be incompatible with what you have experienced as you have grown in your faith. Though we do not desire to step on toes or make others uncomfortable, the reality is that all of us should want to structure ourselves in the way that YHWH appointed, nothing more and nothing less.

**Here is the question:**

**Where in Scripture is there warrant for one man to be the spiritual leader and authority over a local church?**

Some may cite Moses as an example. Moses was one man who was the spiritual leader and authority over all Israel. Therefore, this "Moses model" sets the precedent for how the church should structure itself. There is some truth to that but...we must be careful to understand exactly what that means.

When we read of the accounts of Moses and Israel, YHWH spoke his words to Moses, and Moses disseminated them to the people of Israel.

The scriptures do tell us that this "Moses model" will continue.

**Deuteronomy 18:15**

[The LORD \[YHWH\] your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—](#)

But here is the key question: who fills this role of Moses today? Is it a pastor or a leader appointed by a church? Is it any one of us? Remember what was written:

### **Acts 3:22**

For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you.'

In this passage, Peter is referring to Jesus, or Yeshua as he was called in Hebrew.

This is what is important to understand. Yeshua fills the role of Moses today. None of us can take on the same role that Moses did after the Exodus. That role is reserved for Yeshua our Messiah, and him alone.

We should not liken ourselves to Moses. This is a lesson that Aaron and Miriam learned the hard way in Numbers 12. They said, "Has God only spoken through Moses? Hasn't he spoken through us also?" But God told them that they could not fill Moses' shoes. He said that Moses was a special kind of prophet, who God spoke to face to face, and that Moses was also the most meek man on earth. Miriam was punished for her arrogance with leprosy.

No one else is to be likened unto Moses. That role it not for us to fill. That job and role is reserved for Yeshua our Messiah.

What this means is that for anyone to employ the Moses model for a congregation and liken themselves unto Moses is to replace Yeshua. That is a very dangerous path to entertain...

Let's examine the model at the time of Moses and at the time of Yeshua.

#### **The model following the Exodus was:**

The Father -> who is over Moses -> who is over Israel

#### **The model following Yeshua is:**

The Father -> who is over Yeshua -> who is over Israel

#### **This is not the model:**

The Father -> then Yeshua -> then a head Pastor -> then the Church

Yeshua is our only head covering and authority as the living Word of God.

Paul affirms this model of Yeshua being our head covering here:

### **1 Corinthians 11:3**

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband and the head of Christ is God.

#### **So again, the model, as detailed by Paul, is this:**

The Father (God) -> then Yeshua (Real Head covering) -> then Israel

Yeshua is the greater prophet like unto Moses, and thus, is our head. Just like Moses, Yeshua did not speak his own words or use his own authority but only the words and authority of God our Father:

### **John 14:10**

The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me

does his works.

Notice that, with this model, there is no person between Yeshua and the Body of Messiah. This not to say that Moses' model of authority is not still in effect, we just simply need to understand who takes the role of Moses. Yeshua alone takes this role, not a head pastor, and not any one of us.

Unsurprisingly, we even find this evidenced in the writings of what is often called the New Testament. Many of the New Testament books are letters from apostles to local churches. But none of those letters are addressed to the "head pastor." In fact, the Scriptures never mention a "head pastor" at all, anywhere.

The example of the first century clearly teaches that the primary role in shepherding the local bodies of the churches was exercised not by a solitary 'Pastor' but by a plurality of men, known as elders, bishops or overseers, none of which are referred to as the head.

Many verses conclusively prove this - please carefully note the following examples from the New Testament:

**Acts 14:23**

And when they [the apostles] had appointed elders [plural] for them in every church [singular], with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Titus 1:5**

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders [plural] in every town [singular] as I directed you

**Acts 20:17**

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders [plural] of the church [singular] to come to him

**James 5:14**

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders [plural] of the church [singular], and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

So, we can see that it is not one man who has authority over a congregation, but a group of elders. What do these elders do? These elders have many responsibilities: they resolve disputes (Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), pray and care for the sick (James 5:17), remove troublemakers from the congregation (1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Corinthians 5:3), and set an example of godly conduct (1 Timothy 3:1-7). However, their primary job is to teach, rebuke, and correct using the word of God. The elders also go by other names: in the New Testament, the terms for "elder" (Greek *presbuteros*) and "bishop/overseer" (*piskopos*) are used interchangeably. The term "elder" denotes the person's maturity, while the term "overseer" denotes the person's role and function.

The following passages clearly demonstrate this:

Consider Acts chapter 20

-here Paul asks the Ephesian elders (Greek-*presbuteros* v17) to come and see him, and when they arrive, he addresses them using the word overseers (Greek-*episkopos* v28);

Also consider Titus chapter 1. When outlining leadership qualifications, Paul calls an elder (Greek-*presbuteros* v5) a bishop (Greek-*episkopos* v7);

In 1 Peter chapter 5, Peter exhorts the elders (Greek-*presbuteros* v1) to do the work of overseeing (Greek-*episkopos* v2).

Notice that each local church is to have a group of elders but not another individual over the elders. Again, the headcovering of the Body is Yeshua, not any other person.

### **1 Corinthians 11:3**

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Yeshua is the head of the Body...there is no person that is between Yeshua and the Body. To understand how that works with a husband and wife with Yeshua please see our teaching "[Authority in Marriage](#)."

So if there is to be a group of elders, with no one person as the head, then one might ask "who is to do the teaching?"

Again, the New Testament first century writings answer the question. The Bible makes it clear that it is these elders/overseers to whom God has given the responsibility to feed and teach the flock. This is the pattern that is taught repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

Please carefully note the following passages and the combination of words they contain, words that we have already Biblically defined:

### **Acts 20:28**

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **care for the church of God**, which he obtained with his own blood.

### **1 Peter 5:1-2**

So I exhort the **elders** among you... **shepherd the flock of God that is among you...**

### **1 Timothy 3:2**

Therefore an **overseer** must be...**able to teach**

Now, since the word pastor means 'shepherd', and it is the shepherd's job to look after and feed the flock, we must conclude that in the true Biblical sense it is the elders (overseers) who are the pastors (shepherds) in each church.

There is only one possible conclusion that this Biblical line of reasoning leads to...Here it is - *there is no Biblical place for an extra office or position additional to, or above the elders, such as a main pastor, an assistant pastor, a minister, a senior minister, a leading overseer, a leading elder, a presiding elder, a chief elder, etc. All such offices have no foundation in Scripture. None of these positions exist in the first century writings.*

There are basically two groups...

There are those who are capable of teaching, rebuking, and correcting using the Word of God, who are called elders, overseers, pastors, etc. Every church locality has any number of these persons to serve others. In this group, there is no head but Yeshua.

Then there is the group that are still new to the faith and still have much to learn before they can teach. They are not yet ready to teach, correct, and rebuke others, but are instead in the process of learning to be in such a role... Their head is also Yeshua. The only difference between these two groups is their maturity in the Word of God.

In the Bible, all of the elders are equal. There is no higher office, no person who is above the elders in the local church...with one exception...Yeshua our Messiah, as our head over the Body.

The hierarchical system of church government, where a pastor (with perhaps an assistant) is perched on the apex of a pyramid of say seven elders and twelve deacons, developed slowly from the 2nd century onwards; until by the 6<sup>th</sup> century a well-organized three tier system had developed, which approximated to that which pertains in the Anglican Church today (Encyclopedia Britannica 1953, Vol 18, pages 439-440).

So what is the Biblical model? How are we to organize ourselves? What is the Biblical structure?

The Biblical model is simply this: we are to have elders or overseers or shepherds...all of whom have equal authority, and who are responsible to make sure we stay within the boundaries of the Word of God...They are to ensure that we are learning the Word of God and living out the Word of God.

That is the only authority that the elders have, the Word of God. The elders are given authority by the word of God, and they must, themselves, submit to the authority of the Word. If they fail to do so, then they have no authority. They must project the same authority as the Word of God, which is the same as the authority of Yeshua, who is our head.

The elders are intended serve the congregation, build them up in the Word, and equip and enable more elders to know the Word of God in order to correct, rebuke, and teach others.

Every congregation should have a group of elders with no head overseeing the local body, ensuring others are learning from the Word of God and living the Word of God. Also, just as shepherds protect the flock from wolves, elders, as metaphorical shepherds, protect us from "false prophets and those who would scatter the flock" (Acts 20:28-30; Matthew 7:15).

What about deacons? Some may point to the usage of deacons in a local assembly. The word deacons is derived from the Greek word *diakonos*. The word appears 29 times in the New Testament writings. A few times the word is translated in English as the word deacons. Most often though, the word is translated as servants and in that way, it applies to the whole Body of the Messiah. Meaning, we are all deacons, as we are all servants of the Word of God.

There are some brief mentions of serving in specific ways within the local body, seemingly for administrative, secretarial, and fiscal matters, usually entrusted to a trustworthy individual (Rom. 16:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12). This makes sense, as those in ministry know quite well that many administrative needs present themselves when believers begin to organize together. Thus, deacons are just servants assisting with various administrative matters, some tasks denoting more trust than others.

So, the multiple elders oversee and pastor the congregation, teaching us the Word of God, and helping us stay out of sin, and the deacons administratively assist the local body.

Yet, still, there is no Biblical mention of any head pastor role in the first century church and there is a reason for this. Paul clearly states that man has the honor of living directly under the authority of the Messiah. Man has the ability to receive direct revelation from YHWH through prayer and study. Man was, and is, to walk directly under the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11).

Since man was created to be directly under the headship or authority of the Messiah. Believing men should not place themselves under the authority of a single rabbi, a pope, preacher, pastor, or any other man...

Clearly there may be many that are currently leading a congregation, employing this very model, but have a sincere heart for serving Yahweh, and leading others in truth. We want to make that very clear...there are many pastors with a heart for the Word and love to serve His people.

This is not an attack on pastors in general, just a call and plea to consider going back to the way God designed, not the way that man designed. The idea that somehow now believers are to submit themselves to the authority of a single rabbi, a pope, preacher or pastor is very WRONG!

Even when we believe we are sincerely doing the right thing, we can be sincerely wrong. It is such a danger to the Body, to have one man as the head instead of a plurality of elders, that there are warnings against it.

Yeshua said that such a practice came from the Gentiles...

#### **Matthew 20:25-28**

But Jesus [Yeshua] called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Again, there are plenty of Pastors that are not intentionally "lording" over the congregation, it is the way they have been taught to operate. But the reality is that when a pastor assumes the position of being the head, and since Yeshua is our only head, the pastor is taking the role that is reserved only for Yeshua...

It does not matter what we think about it, it matters what our Lord thinks about it...either his way, or our way. We can intentionally or unintentionally be lording over a congregation....yet regardless of intention, it is not considered a good thing.

As detailed in the New Testament writings, the local church is to only use a group of elders, not a head pastor, to keep themselves contained within the boundaries of the Word of God, so that the Body continues to follow the Messiah, who of course is the Word of God in the flesh. Meaning, the job of the elders is to help the Body live, teach, and act in the same way Yeshua observed the Word of God...nothing more and nothing less...

See, it is not to be about us, it is to be about the Word of God, and the walking, living example our Father provided to us in the form of our Messiah.

Messiah Yeshua walked and followed our Father perfectly, thus he is the perfect example for us to follow. Meaning when we teach, correct, and rebuke as a plurality of elders, it must be based on how Yeshua exemplified the Word of God for us and found in the Torah.

### **Matthew 23:8-10**

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ.

The last thing we should want to do is assume domineering authority over others. Even if that is not what we are intending to do, that is the result in our Lord's eyes. All we can and should do, as elders, should we be qualified as such, is to speak only the Word of God, nothing more or less, simply feeding the flock and keeping them in the fence of Torah, meaning ensuring obedience and not sin. And, most importantly, this is done by an equal group of elders, not by a head individual.

Even in Acts 15, the Jerusalem council acted as an equal group of elders...each giving their own testimony...and James simply iterated the obvious decision.

It is widely believed in Christian circles that James was "head of the Jerusalem elders." If we examine only Biblical evidence, we see in Acts 15 how elders are supposed to behave, each elder giving their own thoughts as witnesses, and once two to three witnesses are heard, then the matter is established. We see how this occurred in Acts 15, finally leading James to propose the obvious solution, more or less as a facilitator, rather than the head authority. Nowhere in Scripture is James listed as the head elder. It was not till about 150 years later, some Greeks mistakenly decided to give James that title:

Consider this quote that was written about 180AD, Hegesippus wrote:

"After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem. Many indeed are called James. This one was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink, ate no flesh, never shaved or anointed himself with ointment or bathed. He alone had the privilege of entering the Holy of Holies, since indeed he did not use woollen vestments but linen and went alone into the temple and prayed in behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees."

*Jerome, De Viris Illustribus, quotes Hegesippus' account of James from the fifth book of his lost Commentaries*

This is the earliest known claim that James was the "head" of the Jerusalem council. However, we do not think that this claim can be trusted. It says that James went into the Holy of Holies, but unless he was a son of Aaron, he couldn't have without dying. It said he didn't bathe, which means he never would have gone through a mikvah and that would have prohibited him from taking part in any of the ceremonies, certainly from entering the Holy of Holies without being killed by God.

It says he was a vegetarian, which means he would not have eaten of the Passover lamb, breaking yet

another commandment. There are a variety of problems with this account of James, making it less than trustworthy.

Hegesippus was a strong proponent of the Roman church, which had the structure of a "head bishop." It is only natural that he would claim the same structure existed in the Jerusalem church, as he had a vested interest in defending his own church's structure. As we've seen, though, the Scriptures do not support such a structure at all. No doubt James was granted a generous amount of respect, given that he was the brother of Yeshua. However, in Acts 15, we can clearly see that everyone performed and was treated as equal elders, and even referred to as such:

#### **Acts 15:2**

*This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.*

Notice how they went up to Jerusalem to go see the apostles and elders, not "James the Head of Jerusalem." If James was the head authority, and the one making the decisions, then they just would have announced intent to go see James...but instead, they announced that they were going to see a plurality of equal elders about the matter.

If we read the account of Acts 15, each person played an equal role of contributing evidence to the case at hand and James simply helped facilitate the ultimate conclusion. He was the only one who had not spoken yet...A facilitator does not mean one has more authority, it is simply a means to keep the conversation going so that the meeting is efficient and productive and finally leads to a conclusion and some sort of action.

In my previous life, before full time ministry, I personally facilitated goal-orientated meetings that had presidents and vice presidents of world-class hospitals in attendance. I was doing this in the same way that James was facilitating in Acts 15. It is very familiar. In other words, I was leading discussion and proposing decisions, but I certainly did not have more authority than those in the meeting...and neither did James....

The only authority is the Word of God and that authority manifested in flesh as Yeshua our Messiah. To claim any more authority is to distract us from our true head covering. Elders are to oversee and keep others in the Word of God, to state more simply, to keep us acting like Yeshua.

The reason for taking the time to review James in Acts 15 is to demonstrate that we cannot point to this chapter and suggest that there is supposed to be a head over the Body of the Messiah besides the Messiah himself. That would contradict the model of Moses by having James take the role of Moses instead of Yeshua take the role of Moses.

Was James the prophet likened unto Moses, or Yeshua? Was James the head covering or Yeshua? These are simple questions deserving simple answers, but we have made things far too complicated in practice. To suggest that James in Acts 15 is proof that we need a head pastor or a pope, is to continue the church structure error that crept into the church in the second century. We should not, be domineering to the Body, but simply lead as examples...and as Peter says, there is only one chief shepherd.

#### **1 Peter 5:2-4**

shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

The reality is that using a head pastor is not scriptural and it is also not fair to the pastor. As we often see, too much responsibility and work is often placed on the pastor...it quickly becomes overwhelming for one person. It also places too much risk on the name of YHWH by making one individual the face of a church or a ministry...

We have all seen instances in which a church or ministry suddenly is branded by a head pastor, which is often evidenced by a person's name and face plastered on almost everything. Is that right? Is that the way it is supposed to be?

What happens when that person makes a mistake? Should one man's mistake be able to discredit the entire church? YHWH never intended for a person to become the face and name for his ministry...because there is only one person qualified for that role and that is Yeshua our Messiah...

When we start following a person, it can eventually lead to division in God's people...that is only one negative symptom of a local church model that has a head pastor instead of simply the Biblical model of a plurality of equal elders.

### **1 Corinthians 1:11-13**

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Yeshua is our head covering, not some other man. Yeshua is our authority, not some other man. Yeshua is the head of the church model typified by Moses, no one else. There is no other head but the one who was crucified for us.

Again, that bears repeating. There is no other head but the one who was crucified for us.

The elders over a local body are to primarily assist in serving the body in such a way that the Body reflects the same image of the Messiah. The elders are to teach everything the Messiah commanded. Even though such a model is the clear example presented in the Old and New Testament, there are going to be some objections to this reality.

For instance, what about Hebrews 13:17

### **Hebrews 13:17**

Obeys your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

Some might point to this and state that the development of a head pastor role, above the elders and congregation is now a matter of obedience. But now notice how it makes no mention of a head pastor in Hebrews 13:17. We are to obey the elders, the elders that know the Word of God and are there to

oversee the congregation, keeping them out of sin through teaching, and rebuking and correcting.

### **John 14:10**

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

Some might say that when a head pastor with one or two associate pastors assemble together, that their decisions, whatever they might be, must be ratified by God because it is written that two to three witnesses establish a matter:

(Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19, Hebrews 10:28)

However, the two the three witnesses are for establishing a charge against an individual. This simply means that there must be two to three witnesses present and testifying before we can make any accusations or decisions against anyone. Then should accusations manifest, it is up the plurality of the elders, operating solely in the authority of the judgments articulated in the written Word of God, to judge accordingly...this is done by the elders of the town not a head pastor.

It certainly does not mean that two to three individuals can change the Word of God. Deuteronomy 13 is a clear testimony against such an idea.

The goal of this teaching is not to knock down those who refer to themselves as head pastors, but it's a simple plea to return to a Biblical church structure that encourages unity under an equal group of elders.

To return to the Biblical system that was employed at Sinai and the first century...We are not supposed to be following anyone or granting anyone authority that replaces the only authority and head covering over us, Yeshua our Messiah, as the living Word of God. We are to submit to a plurality of elders that should only desire to keep us in the Word and out of sin.

Make sure it is only Yeshua you follow, and Yeshua that you give your life over to, the only authority and head covering over his Church.

Back to the model typified by Moses, leading us to the head covering of the Messiah:

### **1 Corinthians 11:3**

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

If we have any more heads than that, then we have a problem.

In summary, there is no Biblical precedent for having a "head pastor," or generally having a single person who has authority over the whole church. Yeshua is our head pastor; he is our chief elder. Church authority is divested into a group of qualified elders. They are required to submit to the Word of God, which is where their authority comes from, and they are entrusted as overseers to make decisions on behalf of the church, and to lead the church into obedience to God's word. A church should not be a "cult of personality," where a single person has all of the authority, makes all of the decisions, and ultimately places himself as a mediator between the people and Yeshua. People in a church should

follow Yeshua first and foremost, with the elders/shepherds helping by protecting them and guiding their steps.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: [www.facebook.com/119Ministries](http://www.facebook.com/119Ministries)

WEBSITE: [www.TestEverything.net](http://www.TestEverything.net)

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://www.twitter.com/119Ministries#)