

Biblical Authority in House Churches (and the Mystery of Lawlessness)

Wayne ODonnell

June 8 at 11:45pm

House Churches are biblical; church buildings aren't. A multiplicity of non-power-hungry elders who don't inhibit the members of the body from ministering and fulfilling their functions is biblical; vs the opposite. But I wonder how much of the house church movement, and its downplaying of first century apostolic authority, and its downplaying of almost all present day elder authority and responsibility (rather than just condemning its abuse), is just part of the bigger movement of "the mystery of lawlessness ... already at work," in the world 2Thes2:7, disdaining all authority structures in all realms, and riding on and making use of the commendable attempt to return to a Biblical ecclesia?

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Ian Vincent I'm on the same page as you, Wayne.

June 8 at 11:53pm · [Unlike](#) · [3](#)

Steve Scott Some of it is, we can probably be sure of that. But I have a few questions. I'm not part of the house church movement, so these questions are out of curiosity and not of opposition to your idea. Does the majority of the house church movement downplay authority and responsibility? And if so, what makes you think that? And, what specifically is an example(s) of the downplay of elder authority and responsibility? Thanks!

June 9 at 12:01am · [Unlike](#) · [3](#)

Joe MacNeill Some folks cant get past the fact that they did go to the temple for teaching & prayers.

June 9 at 12:06am · [Like](#) · [2](#)

Timothy Halls The temple? They were Jews. What do you think they would do? But there are also

People in the story who were excluded from the temple. And the accusation against Paul.

But this thread is about authority and position. And that story about Paul what they did to Paul when he went to Jerusalem with an offering for the saints should provide context for thinking about authority structures in the church.

June 9 at 12:25am · [Like](#) · 1

Wayne ODonnell Steve, I meant it very broadly perhaps including missional and emergent popularity, but one specific example might be Frank Viola's very popular teaching of functional rather than positional leadership. The New Testament upholds the husband/wife, parent/child, master/servant//employer/employee, Eph5-6 and Col3, king/citizen, Rom13, and even the Father/Son heirarchal relationship within the Godhead. Parents do not have leadership roles because they function as parents; they have the authority and responsibility to function as parents because they are in the position of parents, and it wouldn't be appropriate for parents and children to decide who leads based on whoever does it. Likewise a wife shouldn't function as the husband and visa versa based on who is a better leader; they both have their roles assigned based on their respective office and position. I can't take the role of boss from the employer that pays me for my work as an employee, and the New Testament encourages me to accept my employer's authority over me. Frank says "there is no room in the teaching of Jesus for the hierarchical leadership model" and yet Jesus himself willingly fulfills his position in a heirarchal authority structure, "the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" 1Cor11. 1Cor15:28, "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

June 9 at 7:42am · Edited · [Like](#) · 2

Lori Lee Blackburn Wayne ODonnell, you are tracking! This discussion is important. The gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are given to equip the saints.....So these do have their place, function and authority in the home church. Home church government is viable.

June 9 at 6:48am · [Unlike](#) · 3

Dale Shumaker Like what Viola says... they are a "function, not a position" nor a seat of authority, but mature people with gifts to help each other. Servants of all. They don't find it necessary to be called Apostle Jim, Pastor John, Prophet Paul, etc. they are humble folks carrying out the gift the Spirit has given them.

June 9 at 8:41am · Edited · [Like](#) · 5

Joe MacNeill It's not "home" vs. "church" though. The Body of Christ is to be a dynamic organism which is "in the world but not of it." When 1 Cor. 3, 1-13 warns against using buildings as a foundation for fellowship/ministry, that could well include houses too. But yes, true gifts and callings can only be identified, nurtured and exercised in authentic, intimate relationship where there is accountability & balance.

June 9 at 8:31am · [Like](#) · 1

Dan Beaty Wayne, we swung to the extreme at first. The un biblical part failed. You can't liberate some by binding others.

June 9 at 8:32am · [Like](#) · 1

Joe MacNeill "Leadership" of the Biblical kind is solely relational, nothing like the cult of business-modeled "church," which is a completely artificial environment.

June 9 at 8:33am · [Like](#) · 3

Rob Dolby Totally agree with Wayne.

June 9 at 8:45am · [Unlike](#) · 1

Dan Beaty Steve, it would be hard to say about the majority. Those I have been in contact with have a healthy view of leadership. IMO, even some of those who deny leaders can be controlling, just in a different way.

June 9 at 8:55am · [Unlike](#) · 1

Alan Garrett I agree house churches are biblical. But you cannot say that bigger buildings are not biblical. The early believers also met in other buildings like the Hall of Tyrannus, the Temple and synagogues. And, yes I realize that many synagogues were in small settings that were house-like.

June 9 at 8:24pm · [Edited](#) · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty Alan, I agree that larger buildings can be biblical. I do believe that they can become a hindrance in our day, when we change the way we relate to one another in them.

June 9 at 7:06pm · Like · 3

Alan Garrett Dan Beaty Yes. Agreed.

June 9 at 8:24pm · Like

Ian Vincent There's a vast difference between a Christian who believes what the NT says concerning the church, but due to circumstance has not yet been able to participate in a mature expression of a NT church, and the "Christian" who denies what scripture says pertaining to the church. These are two totally different species of people.

June 9 at 9:08pm · Like

Timothy Halls "A mature expression of a NT church". Do you mean the church in Corinth or the one in Colossae? Or maybe you mean Ephesus where Timothy worked?

June 9 at 9:11pm · Like

Ian Vincent The building or place of meeting should be neutral ground. That is, it doesn't become an issue as to who owns or controls the building. This is why rented buildings are safer than church owned. The shape or size is irrelevant. If people see the building as having spiritual significance, that is a big problem.

June 9 at 9:13pm · Unlike · 1

Wayne ODonnell Alan, meeting at the Temple was temporary until the persecutions began, right? And I know that Paul went "to the Jew first" Rom1 in every new city he evangelized, and then after the local Jewish people rejected the message he went to the Gentiles in that city, but I don't know of any passage to imply that the believers could have the Lord's supper or a 1Cor 11-14 gathering in a synagogue. The synagogue Jews were probably the ones that "concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake" Rom11:28, at that time. And Paul's teaching in the hall of Tyrannus sounds like an evangelistic outreach to me, even if he taught Christians there in public also as an outreach. I don't see any signs of church gatherings in the passage, do you?

June 9 at 9:17pm · Edited · Like

Timothy Halls Wayne, most of the believers in the churches where Paul went would not have been allowed in the temple. Acts 21:17-36

June 9 at 9:18pm · Like

Ian Vincent Dan said: "they can become a hindrance in our day, when we change the way we relate to one another in them." Spot on!

June 9 at 9:24pm · Unlike · 2

Wayne ODonnell Dan, "we swung to the extreme at first" - you mean house churches went too far in the other direction from abusive eldership patterns? "You can't liberate some by binding others," could you maybe say a little more about this?

June 9 at 9:34pm · Like

Ian Vincent Paul "dialogued" daily in the Hall of Tyrannus during their lunch break. Yes, it was Paul's teaching meeting, not a regular church meeting.

June 9 at 9:37pm · Like

Dan Beaty Wayne, I was speaking of our specific situation, but I have found others who followed the same pattern. It is too long a story for right now, but I would like to clarify the latter statement.

Many voices in the HC movement were calling for an end to teachers and preachers. We had become weary of preaching dominating meetings ourselves, but silencing those gifts does not automatically energize others. I have always been for the functioning of all of the members in the body of Christ, including those whose gifts are to lead, or instruct the younger ones.

It is not either/or in this case, according to NT Scripture.

June 9 at 10:15pm · Unlike · 2

Dan Beaty Ian, There is an interesting little book by Watchman Nee entitled, "Assembling Together," that describes the different types of meeting in the NT. I need to read it again myself.

<http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/AssemblingTogether.pdf>

June 9 at 10:22pm · Edited · Unlike · 1

Ian Vincent Thanks bro. I read the whole of Nee's works years back. Solid stuff.

June 9 at 10:37pm · Unlike · 1

Alan Garrett Wayne O'DONNELL Paul taught there for two years. It was more than an evangelistic outreach. I really like house churches. But you cannot just dismiss meeting at the temple as a temporary thing. The only reason they stopped meeting there is because they were kicked out. Early Christianity was a part of Judaism for a number of years. They were not even called Christians till the Church exploded in Antioch. Jesus held both large and small gatherings. So you cannot say large church meetings are not biblical. If I had to through out one...I would through out larger meetings. But it is not accurate to say they are not Biblical.

June 9 at 10:47pm · Edited · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty It looks to me like the believers in Acts simply wanted to be together in any way they could. There have been many periods in the life of the church where people were simply drawn together by a common experience of His Life. That desire is the important ingredient to me.

June 9 at 10:58pm · [Unlike](#) · 3

Steve Scott Wayne ODonnell, thanks for your reply. I think I understand the difference between functional and positional leadership and how a substitution could cause problems. But what might that look like with elders in the church? Could you give hypotheticals of what positional authority an elder could exercise that is downplayed by the HC movement?

June 9 at 11:09pm · [Unlike](#) · 1

Alan Garrett I believe I am a elder because "I eld." I function that way and people recognize it. Titles are not worth much. If you pastor people...then you are a pastor. /elder. If you are consistent, people recognize it. Authority is a gift from God... kind of like that E.F. Hutton commercial from along time ago. True authority is not controlling. People follow because they want to. True authority is servant hood and leading by example. True Eldership is a function, not a title.

June 9 at 11:22pm · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls Alan your comment that Early believers were kicked out of the temple is not consistent with the biblical record.

June 9 at 11:34pm · [Like](#)

Ian Vincent Having the Jewish leaders try to kill you is as good as being kicked out.
.....Re: title and function: why can't people be known by their function and then acknowledged as elders, teachers, etc. without using honorific titles?
June 9 at 11:57pm · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls They tried to kill Paul, but not James, Peter or the other disciples in Acts 21. (though they had tried to do do earlier).
June 10 at 12:02am · [Like](#)

Alan Garrett **Timothy Halls** maybe kicked out is not the proper term. They were scattered because of persecution...especially the Hellenists. Yes, the Jerusalem church may have continued to meet there. So maybe my comment was not thought through. The point I was trying to make was that is that you cannot dismiss meeting in large gatherings based on the Bible. And I do realize that the primary meeting place for the church for the first 200 years was in homes. I like home churches. I just do not think you can right off larger meetings. They have their place.
June 10 at 12:04am · Edited · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls I don't think you need the Bible to make that argument. All you can say from Bible is that they gathered in lots of different contexts and that very few of them look like the ones we use today. On the other hand there is very little data on meetings like the ones we have now. But that doesn't mean that our ways of meeting are against the scriptural testimony, or that the problems we have reflect our failure to follow some purported NT pattern.

The scriptures seem to authorize a wide variety of practices.
June 10 at 12:08am · [Like](#) · 3

Alan Garrett Yup. I was responding to the original post.
June 10 at 12:10am · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls Yea. I think it reflects a misguided attempt to nail down a NT pattern. The NT record is too full of conflict and discovery and BECOMING -- hard to expect a timeless definition in that. What is timeless is that it is the beginning of the story of how

the coming of Israel's anointed one will be the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless all humanity through his seed. And that the Spirit will create a new ethnicity blending Jews and the nations into a new gathering around a table in which all are included.

June 10 at 12:22am · Like · 3

Wayne ODonnell Well, **Steve** rather than answer how a hierarchical positional structure vs. a non-hierarchical functional non-structure might affect how an elder functions, let me start by considering how it might affect those who are not elders (which I assume is the majority of us in the church though maybe not of us on this FB group). If eldership is positional and not merely functional then "there am I in the midst of them" Mt18:20 does not equal "when ye come together in the church" or "when ye come together therefore into one place" etc etc 1Cor 11 - 14 or "the assembling of yourselves together" which we are not to "forsake" Heb10:25; and thus non-elders have an obligation to attempt to gather with more complete groups when feasible rather than just shooting some pool together over a few drinks now and then. So the church is organic since it is his body, but the whole foundation of some versions of organic church, relational church, and simple church doctrines must reinterpret all references to rightful hierarchical authority structures in the New Testament to be merely functions to be able to consider their practices to be Biblical. And I guess that brings us back to the original post about the relationship between the popularity of the house church (or organic church) movements and the "mystery of lawlessness" at work in the world that rejects the goodness of hierarchical authority structures which the New Testament supports (and also the authority of the word).

June 10 at 1:03pm · Edited · Like · 1

Dan Beaty What about this thought? If we pay attention to the direct commands of Jesus, the implied commands will work themselves out. "Love one another as I have loved you." It would make sense that all would be looking out for better ways to help one another, as opposed to forcing our wills on one another.

June 10 at 8:56am · Like · 1

Lori Lee Blackburn Tracking again **Wayne ODonnell**! I lead a house church and we have authority structures- five fold ministry, elders - all church government that is Biblically supported. Don't want to enter into debate on this forum. Been doing this for 10 years. Anyone who wants to PM me may and I will graciously answer any inquiries as to our understanding and how the Lord has lead us.

June 10 at 9:15am · Edited · Unlike · 1

David Dickerson On the topic of big church buildings vs home churches: I think it's important to note that there's quite a difference between having a large meeting (which may require a large meeting place, and which seems to be one of the reasons the early church in Jerusalem met in the temple (another could simply be because they were Jews and had the association between God and the temple)), and the modern association of a building being the church (the "institutional church"). Our group here meets in homes, or the park, because we can. If we grow much larger, that will become much less possible. My point is that the location shouldn't matter, if the *identity* of the church is correct: the church is expressed in local gathering of saints who are *in Christ*. That is not altered by where they meet. But putting the identity of the church on any building, location, or system isn't biblical.

June 10 at 12:52pm · [Unlike](#) · 1

Timothy Halls oh my!

June 10 at 1:19pm · [Unlike](#) · 1

David Dickerson On the original topic: I think there's been some throwing the baby out with the bathwater when it comes to leadership, hierarchy, authority in the church, etc., probably mostly due to abuse of these things, and people getting hurt.

I'm in no way advocating that we should put these things in place. I believe we should let the King lead us through the Spirit, and be open to having our traditions and ideas completely handled by him. I believe very strongly in the organic-ness of the Body of Christ.

I don't personally have a problem with leadership in a church, and by this, I mean with recognized elders or leaders. But I've also had the blessing of being raised in a church where those leaders are some of the most honest, humble, and loving people I know. They are my dear friends. I know that they are open to correction and are "submitted one to another" with me and every other saint.

But, we're also in no hurry to select leaders or appoint elders in the church I'm a part of here in Northern California (a different church). We are growing together, letting the Lord have his way. But those functions are already apparent in some of the saints. We trust the Lord to lead.

Where I think the views of no hierarchy could possibly be damaging is if it ends up causing the local body to try to operate more as a "political system", where consensus is more about voting than about unity. Consensus is wonderful, it's just not voting. We are led by the Word of God (Jesus). I've seen before where all the saints in a meeting felt in agreement about a particular matter, and one person then hesitantly said, "I disagree, I think that..." and gave a different opinion, which the rest immediately recognized as the Word of God for that situation.

One note: I've talked with some "leaders" in the organic church movement, and I know they believe in authority, and have even exercised authority from what I can see in good ways.

Some of the hierarchy/non-hierarchy and position/function arguments could be about semantics. But that can become important if it robs the Body of being able to function healthily.

Also, as much as I agree that the Godhead is a beautiful picture of the community life of God, using it as a model of a strictly non-hierarchical view is something I find problematic, as it doesn't seem the biblical view, or early church's understanding. A friend of mine put together a good, honest series of articles on the historical view of the trinity that you can find here if interested: <http://www.christian-history.org/the-trinity.html>

The Trinity: Doctrine, Development, and Definition

Did you ever wonder what the apostles believed about...

CHRISTIAN-HISTORY.ORG

June 10 at 1:30pm · Unlike · 2

Timothy Halls frown emoticon

June 10 at 2:09pm · Like

Timothy Halls I think I need to focus on my work and not on this

June 10 at 2:48pm · Unlike · 2

Ross Rohde **Steve Scott** the following quote from you on this thread are good questions. They should be on another thread. The best way to do that is start one with these questions:

Does the majority of the house church movement downplay authority and responsibility? And if so, what makes you think that? And, what specifically is an example(s) of the downplay of elder authority and responsibility?

June 10 at 2:50pm · Like · 1

David Dickerson ... and the thread's completely derailed.

June 10 at 4:01pm · [Unlike](#) · 1

Ross Rohde **David Dickerson** is quite correct, this thread is derailed. It is not about women in leadership, nor is that an organic church topic per se. I have deleted the comments that I found about that issue, pro and con. I may have missed some. Please do not comment on that issue further.

June 10 at 5:46pm · [Unlike](#) · 2

Wayne O'Donnell To summarize some of the recommendations made about the place of gathering:

* **Dan** said the building/location is important only to the extent it changes the way we relate to one another in it.

* **Ian** said the location should be neutral, like rented would be better than owned for a non-house building. (That's why I recommend the person whose house the meeting is at not be the one facilitating the meeting if one facilitates, or doing the extended teaching if you have such.) Of course this also eliminates the money spent on building maintenance, and Yeshua said your heart will be where you put your money.

* **Ian** and **David** warned about a building/location that could take on some kind of spiritual or church identity.

* **Alan** implied smaller settings have advantages over larger settings.

I would add that the casual, comfortable, nitty-gritty life, let-your-guard-down intimacy and family interaction fostering aspects of a home are an advantage also. And in houses we usually sit facing each other although that seating arrangement can and should be duplicated in non-home settings when possible when you meet outside etc.

Others have said the building/location is irrelevant but I disagree. I think God could have provided the early church a big building in one or two of the cities the church was in and recorded that fact in scripture, but because only house church church gatherings are recorded (I mentioned earlier I don't think the Hall of Tyrannus was a church gathering) I think He is indicating that when we meet in a building (vs outside) we should try to meet in houses whenever possible rather than in big public buildings for instance.

I'm thinking that if we change back from church buildings to houses, and from presenting a show to 1Cor11-14 participatory meetings (which are encouraged by meeting in houses both by the intimacy and also the automatic limitation on the size of the group), then conscientious elders will figure out from the NT how to function properly, without throwing out positional hierarchical eldership.

As for a non-hierarchical, functional-only eldership, as promoted by **Wesley Rostoll's**

great post on this site (and I love his description of one of their meetings of the kind I'm sure most of us have experienced), I don't think it can be successfully defended by a New Testament that teaches that God loves parent/child, husband/wife, employer/employee, ruler/citizen, God the Father/God the Son type relationships.

June 11 at 9:08am · Edited · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty One thing that I have experienced in the past, and most likely others have also, is that a once a week meeting in a building does not necessarily define or limit how the members relate to one another the rest of the week. In fact, I had a greater sense of community in the church my wife and I were married in and attended for 20 years than I have experienced since doing house church.

June 11 at 9:06am · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell Wow, [Dan](#), that has not been my experience. I wonder if there's something lacking in the house churches currently meeting in your area or if my assumption that house churches would almost always naturally provide more sense of community is incorrect. I was very close to one other family in the IC when they took me under their wing when I first believed and also had some closeness via all the youth group activities. But I would hope that 20 years in a house church would normally result in stronger ties than 20 years in non-participatory church meetings.

June 11 at 9:34am · Edited · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls So if you don't have a building, you can't have a building campaign and you lose the opportunity to stir the commitment of your people using the imagery of the temple from 1Kings! In the process you lose all the validation of your role in the church (that is, you don't get to act like you were Solomon!)

June 11 at 9:45am · [Like](#)

Ross Rohde [Timothy Halls](#) your sarcasm is palpable and entertaining wink emoticon.

June 11 at 10:12am · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls Go ahead and say it..."and it also conveys a profound truthiness!"

June 11 at 10:27am · [Like](#)

Ross Rohde Yes, [Timothy Halls](#), truthiness in all it Colbertian glory.

June 11 at 11:37am · Like · 1

Wayne ODonnell I know one pastor that strongly encouraged everyone to become church members and taught it was important because otherwise the church wouldn't be able to revoke your membership if you deserved discipline.

June 11 at 12:43pm · Like · 1

Timothy Halls There you go validating the hierarchy again.

June 11 at 12:45pm · Unlike · 1

Wayne ODonnell smile emoticon

June 11 at 2:35pm · Like

Wesley Rostoll Enjoying this thread, **Wayne ODonnell**, I was planning on writing on this topic on the weekend. I'll try and address the case for hierarchical relationships mentioned here in that post as well. At least as I see them. Thanks for the tag!

June 11 at 3:55pm · Unlike · 1

Dan Beaty **Wayne**, the very point I was trying to make is about assumptions. The reasons that we experienced what we did is another story

Actually this discussion is an unusual phenomenon to me. People defending hierarchy and not getting flamed on an organic church forum!

June 11 at 10:22pm · Edited · Unlike · 1

Dan Beaty Food for thought on the subject of authority. In my profession, I am an authority on the subject of house painting and decorating. It is not that I was voted into an office, or recieved some kind of commision, or even a piece of paper stating that I have completed a course in painting.

Simply by virtue of my 40 years of doing what I do I have gained enough experience and knowledge that others respect my opinions in matters relating to painting and wallpapering. No one is required to follow my advise or "leadership," but that does not bother me.

Most do, and when they don't they often come back to me and ask me to fix the problem they are left with.

June 11 at 7:58pm · [Unlike](#) · 2

Timothy Halls 40 years of experience in the gospel, if you count from the death of Jesus would put you well after the NT was written. So that can't be the kind of people who functioned as elders. Calculate for yourself how many years from the first converts in Ephesus to Paul's meeting with the Ephesian elders on the beach in Acts 20:17

June 11 at 8:49pm · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty Timothy, can you see any value in what I wrote about authority? I never said that one had to have 40 years in the Gospel to elder. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus indicate that elders should prove themselves worthy of respect, in fact, the same was said about the deacons.

June 11 at 10:27pm · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls Definitely there authority in experience. It is kind of scary, because it involves acting responsibly with it. The only thing I was saying is that when we think about that kind of authority based on experience, and deployed for some kind of "ecclesiastical structure" we cannot assume that we are talking about the same kind of thing that is talked about in the NT. We have to come to terms with the disconnect if we are going to come up with some way to understand the relevance of the NT experience in our time and place.

Yesterday at 1:26am · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell Yes in the English dictionary, the meaning "expert" is the meaning you are describing. I am maintaining that the authority in the authority structures I mentioned above are positional authority delegated from one person to another. "For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it, Mt8:9. Rightful being in authority comes from being -under- authority.

A husband enters his role the moment he is married and from then on his authority and responsibility doesn't change regardless of how well or badly he fulfills his assignment. A parent becomes a parent at the moment of birth. An employer becomes an employer the moment he hires someone. A centurion becomes a centurion the moment he is appointed as one.

The apostles became apostles as soon as Jesus appointed them to be apostles,

Lu6:13ff "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor." Yeshua even knew that Judas was an unbeliever with a wicked heart but he gave him the same apostolic authority as the other apostles, Lu9 "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases."

But Jesus always performed the subordinate role as the Son to the Father. He - became- and was -made- the son of David when he -became- flesh but he could only be -declared- to be the Son which he always was. "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power" Rom1:3-4. (Also Jn1:1 "was God" vs 1:14 "became flesh".)

22 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell Also Jesus is the best example of the kind of authority I'm talking about. He did not become our Lord by serving, by putting on a towel and washing the disciples feet. And he did not stop being our Lord by serving, by putting on a towel and washing the disciples feet. He said so. Jn13 "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet."

23 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty The one under God's authority will prove to be worthy of respect. My point.

23 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell Every person is under Gods rightful authority. I think you are saying that the one who -acts- like he is under God's authority is not only worthy of respect (of course good deserves appreciation and respect) but also thus becomes what the NT calls an elder. But the centurion in my example was under authority because he was appointed and delegated authority. He may have been appointed because of nepotism but his delegated authority doesn't change because of that.

22 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Dan Beaty But if he disobeyed he could lose his position of authority.

23 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell No he can't by disobeying *pe se*. Only if his disobedience becomes known to his superior (not superior in value or quality but in position) and his superior decides to remove him from his position as centurion.

22 hrs · Like

John Frank Morin I think too often we are looking for a relative authority rather than an actual anointed authority from heaven. But then even if such an authority presented itself I doubt few would discern it. So we have a dual dilemma I think. People don't believe that a man can have a heavenly authority...because if they did, they would still be in the bondage of the system whereby a false authority is being promoted. The way of Christ is very narrow indeed.

20 hrs · Like

Timothy Halls Why does this thread keep going back to "men" having authority. How are buildings, male authority and the mystery of lawlessness linked?

19 hrs · Like

Wayne ODonnell I assume that our desire to do what the Bible says is greater than our desire to manifest organicness; that we are wanting to manifest organicness because the Bible says we should and therefore we are willing to do any of the things the Bible says even if it might make manifesting organicness more difficult. (Noone disputes we are organic, its the implications of being organic that are open to discussion.) I mentioned that I'm thinking that if we got back to the Biblical place of meeting (houses), and got back to the Biblical kind of meeting (1Cor11-14 participatory), then concientious elders would figure out how to function Biblically, rather than throwing out the positional authority of elders (which seems to be the straightforward reading about elders in the NT in harmony with the other authority structures I mentioned), to try to fix the obvious abuses we see in most positional elders today. My concern is that the popularity of house/organic/simple churches may be largely due to the end times progression of throwing off all authority, the authority of the word, and especially the authority structures that God himself created (Husband/Wife, Parent/Child, Employer/Employee, etc.)..

19 hrs · Edited · Like · 1

Timothy Halls So you are suggesting that you know which authority structures God created and expects to operate in the church. Am I getting that right?

19 hrs · Like

Ross Rohde **Wayne ODonnell** the "authority issue" had been debated many times in this group. If you want to start a new thread to discuss it go ahead. It usually comes down to definition of words. Those who want to have humans with power and "authority" over others usually go to English translations, particularly the King James. The words they are emphasizing can just as easily be translated to avoid the implications of power and authority. Often this is a better translations, particularly given historical context. But, it is vague enough given 2,000 years of separation, let alone culture and the realities of language translation, that it can never be perfectly resolved.

19 hrs · Like · 2

Wayne ODonnell As I mentioned earlier, in order to say that elders are elders because they function as elders, function instead of position; the organic movement must show that all the authority structures that God created and promotes in the NT, (Husband/Wife, Parent/Child, Employer/Employee, Governor/Citizen, Apostle/Church, and God the Father/God the Son, and others), are functional rather than positional, or why out of all of them, elders alone is different, when there's no need to have it be different because if the others are good in God's eyes then positional authority itself can't be bad. And **Wesley Rostoll** said he may address something related to this issue this weekend. And **Steve Scott** is the one who asked me about it and I expect he will give some feedback when he's ready; and Lori Lee Blackburn said this is an important topic, so although you may have discussed it before, some people seem to be interested, and it is all very much connected with whether the mystery of lawlessness is at work. Also, it's not a side issue to the movement because it affects the definition of the meeting of the church, and whether two or three gathered together in His name, is what God intended for the ecclesia, which probably also has been discussed before, but it's still important since it is fundamental to the movement.

19 hrs · Edited · Like

Ross Rohde **Wayne ODonnell**, most of that has been done quite well. I don't think the familial relational issues, the social issues and the trinitarian issues are pertinent although you may think so. In my opinion, this has more to do with a hierarchical worldview that faithfulness to Scriptures. If one's worldview is hierarchical it will see all relationships as hierarchical. My main issue with the positional power issues in the new covenant church is that they violate the new covenant and take authority away from Jesus' leadership. In the new covenant we can actually have him lead a meeting and that's exactly what we are seeing in I Cor. 14. Again, however, if you want to continue on this subject, start another thread. I won't respond again on this one since it diverts, conflates and therefore confuses subjects.

19 hrs · Like

Wayne ODonnell Ok, so please succinctly restate the subject of this thread so we can all limit our comments to the subject of the thread.

19 hrs · [Like](#)

Ross Rohde Wayne ODonnell you are correct, I focused on the church building issue.

19 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell It is a very long thread. It does have several sub topics though pretty much all touched upon in the original post.

19 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Ross Rohde **Wayne ODonnell**, I have yet to see someone prove New Testament human authority of one person over another without reading their definition of what either English or Greek words mean or putting their own cultural values into the text. Personally I think that's what is happening here. But, as stated above, the texts are just vague enough that one could do that in, what in my opinion is a tortured interpretation. Suffice it to say that with an equal or often better hermeneutic organic church people have countered all the arguments for human power and authority in the church about which Jesus said "All authority has been given to me." I've also never seen a solid argument which can take that authority and give it to a human with an organizational title. And I've never seen an adequate biblical argument given as to why we would need human power in the new covenant anyway. Those arguments can be made, they just aren't all that solid as they appear at first blush. I think that's what is going on here.

18 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell A good starting point might be to determine if the relationship between the Father and the Son is hierarchical. I noticed last night when I was taking a look at Frank Viola's chapter on "Who is Your Covering" that he believes it is not hierarchical. **David Dickerson** mentioned earlier in this thread that "As much as I agree that the Godhead is a beautiful picture of the community life of God, using it as a model of a strictly non-hierarchical view is something I find problematic, as it doesn't seem the biblical view, or early church's understanding. A friend of mine put together a good, honest series of articles on the historical view of the trinity that you can find here if interested." The reason it matters is that if a hierarchical structure exists from eternity past and to eternity future in the Godhead then hierarchical structures themselves can be very very good if the two parties behave in love and submission, each submitting to

the other, but only in ways that are appropriate to their position, one giving up his own benefit for the welfare of the other and the other giving up his own will to do the will of the other so they can walk the same way and be together - a hierarchical union, which is the only kind that exists, because even we are only united horizontally and are one with each other because we are all united vertically to Him and are all in Him.

18 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls This is painful for me to watch. Are we asking the Bible to tell us who we can exercise authority over? (or to tell others that they should respect our authority?)

18 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell I don't think either of those questions should be considered before determining if Biblical godly authority is heirarchical/positional or non-heirarchical/functional (and maybe the way those two questions are worded they should never be asked because they both seem to have a selfishness in them). I think a good process would be 1) try to determine if the Father/Son relationship in the Godhead is positional/heirarchical, and if so then positional/heirarchical relationships can be very good and very pleasing to God; then 2) try to determine if the other apparently positional/heirarchical relationships actually are so, the husband/wife, parent/child, employer/employee, ruler/citizen, apostle/church, elder/church; and if they are, or most of them are, then why any particular ones that are not are exceptions, when if we get past step 1, we would already know that positional/heirarchical relationships are never bad in and of themselves.

17 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls I am asking what motivates you to ask your questions of the Bible. Why do you approach it with that problem to solve?

17 hrs · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls

17 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell My motivation is for us to be Biblical. Several people mentioned in this thread that even though they (possibly) might not believe in positional/heirarchal authority, they can see how we may be harmed or miss important benefits if that is God's design and we miss it because of, for example, our eagerness to escape from the problems and abuses of IC leadership. Thanks for posting the link. I'll take a look at it tonight or as soon as I can.

1 hr · [Edited](#) · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls The link is not serious Sorry, I was just having some fun. Malcolm Gladwell did not ever write such a book.

16 hrs · [Like](#) · 1

Wayne ODonnell Haha. Ok. The subtitle should have 'tipped me off' lol! smile emoticon

16 hrs · [Edited](#) · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls Regarding the more serious part of our conversation I am all for being biblical. Part of that, in my book, is that we have to respect the scriptures as they are presented. The form that they come to us is important. It is not a mistake that it comes in the form of a narrative that tells what happened and not as an owners' manual with an index at the back, where we can look up "positional authority". Nor is there a chapter on church meetings, or on church buildings. It doesn't start from this question.

But WE are starting from that perspective and it makes a difference in what we find when we read it.

Don't misunderstand me, if we have questions about positional authority, the Bible is a good place to look for precedent. But we have to recognize that the position from which we approach the Bible is necessarily going to affect what we find, particularly if we are looking for something that is not there.

We have to recognize that it is OUR question, but not one the Bible sets out to answer.

16 hrs · Edited · [Unlike](#) · [2](#)

Timothy Halls Humor for a Friday
afternoon<http://www.malcolmgladwellbookgenerator.com>

The Malcolm Gladwell Book Generator

MALCOLMGLADWELLBOOKGENERATOR.COM

16 hrs · [Like](#)

Wayne ODonnell That's hilarious. And this one is actually real ...

15 hrs · [Like](#) · [1](#)

Wayne ODonnell As mentioned above, I think a good Step 1 to determining if heirarchical/positional authority relationships are good (the church should manifest the mystery of NON-lawlessness) and if they are the kind promoted throughout the NT, including elders, is to try to determine if the Father/Son relationship in the Godhead is a heirarchical one. Frank Viola is wrong on this topic of the relationship between the Father and the Son in his chapter on "Who Is Your Covering."

In value and essence, Christ is equal to God the Father in every way. Jesus, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," Phil2:6. But in position, "The Father is greater than I", Jn14:28, and thus Jesus always functions in the role that a son does to a father.

* The Father gives, the Son receives, "so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," Jn5:26. Jn10:29, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all."

* The Father teaches; the Son learns, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me," Jn8:28.

* The Father sends; the Son goes, "he that sent me is with me," Jn8:28. Jn13:16, "neither [is] he that is sent greater than he that sent him."

* The Father commands; the Son obeys, "I do always those things that please him," Jn8:29.

* The Father loves and shows; the Son submits and watches. Jn5:20, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth."

Both submit to each other but only in ways appropriate to their offices; the Father submits by loving and giving up his self interest for the sake of the Son, and the Son submits by giving up his own will to do the will of the Father, so there can be prefect unity and harmony together. It would not be appropriate for the Son to teach, or send, or command the Father.

From eternity past, Christ functioned as the Son of God. Rm1:3-4, "his Son ... which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness." Who was it that was made flesh? It was "his Son" as the beginning of the verse states. Also, he had to be "made" flesh, but he only had to be "declared" to be the Son that he already was from eternity past.

And for eternity future, Christ will remain in an inferior position to the Father. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him [the Son], then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [God] that put all things under him [the Son], that God may be all in all," 1Cor15:28.

We (especially in the organic church movement) want to know Jesus first and only in simplicity without encumbrance. Well, this is an important thing to know about Jesus, that he is forever in a heirarchical/positional authority relationship with his Father that greatly affects everything about him

•

•

Ross Rohde Wayne ODonnell, you are making a correlation between the Godhead and church structure. I don't think this correlation can be made in Scripture, it is your assumption. To make that assumption then insist that it is therefore the model for church leadership is quite tenuous.

June 13 at 3:42pm · [Like](#)

•

Wayne ODonnell I'm not sure anyone can prove from scripture either that eldership is or is not positional/heirarchical. But it is relevant whether or not positional/heirarchical structures are in themselves good or bad even if they may only be so in certain situations, which is why I think a consideration of the Godhead is Step 1 in arriving at a answer.

Frank Viola certainly thinks the situation in the Godhead is relevant to the issue. From Reimagining Church: "In sum, the New Testament orientation of leadership is organic and functional. The hierarchical/positional orientation is fundamentally worldly. ... The church is ... called to mirror the reciprocal love relationship that eternally flows within the triune God. Thus within the fellowship of the church, there is ... no hierarchy ... Why? Because the church is called to live by divine life—the same life that exists within the Godhead."

So can we at least agree that, despite Frank's assertions to the contrary, the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Godhead is a positional/heirarchical one, based on the scriptures in John etc as mentioned above, and that therefore positional/heirarchical authority relationships are in themselves very good and godly, whether or not we are able to determine if that is the structure God has chosen for his body the church?

June 13 at 4:56pm · Edited · [Like](#) · 1

•

Timothy Halls I think you found what you were looking for--support for the idea of positional authority. I don't think you have allowed the scripture to question your perspective. When scripture is allowed to speak for itself, I find that it calls me to account. I need to learn to think and act differently, more in accord with God's call.

Your interaction with the passage may be helpful for supporting a perspective, or an argument, and if that is what you need, just be clear about what you are using the scriptures for.

It's still the word of God.

June 13 at 4:57pm · Edited · [Like](#)

•
Ian Vincent There is actually a very close correlation between the nature of God and the nature of His church, for the church is his body, His flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30). It's actually the key to understanding why things were done the way they were. The NT pattern reflects the nature of Christ.

June 13 at 8:20pm · Edited · [Unlike](#) · 1

•
Ian Vincent The elders in the 1st century were both relational and positional in authority, and yet only positional as a plurality: they only had power to act as a presbytery, not alone. And it was limited to the locality. Only by being relational in their ministry were they recognized and ordained publicly. How could one argue from scripture that the elders who were ordained in the church had no position? Much of the time the Bible asks us to accept two parallel truths.

June 13 at 8:20pm · [Like](#) · 1

•
Rob Dolby Agree with [Ian Vincent](#) .

June 13 at 8:53pm · [Like](#)

•
Timothy Halls Not "below"? That's where Paul located himself.

June 13 at 9:07pm · [Like](#) · 2

•
Giovanni Riccitelli I'm going to a house church in 5 minutes, we have em at my house too. But there is nothing wrong with having a bigger building or hall. The problem is the pews and sermon / lecture. Just let the Church commune and fellowship. All they need are 'tables', we have done it in a room with 1-200 people, all 4-8 at a table, talking, praying, communicating, studying all at the same time! It is awesome. House churches just become little man centered clergy institutions if you neglect communication, talking, interaction, and oneness.

June 13 at 9:29pm · [Like](#) · 2

•
Rob Dolby I have been part of many of the Elder discussions on this page. Still pretty unconvinced that Elders were simply the more mature. So instead of rehearsing the various reasons I think that is a poor conclusion, I would rather ask a

couple questions..

Is there a way to reach maturity in Christ without a proper understanding of scripture ? Is everyone's impact/influence in a local gathering of equal importance or equally beneficial to the local gathering ?

Does it not seem less than humble to believe that you are of equal importance to the fellowship as a mature brother who has a teaching gift? As I read these threads I am repeatedly concerned that many on this page have a low regard for scripture and a problem dealing with others having gifts that place them over you.. The gifting of shepherd/pastor suggests their are sheep.

June 13 at 9:35pm · [Like](#) · 1

•
Ian Vincent The NT presbytery/eldership would correct people, remove false teachers and make moral judgments pertaining to individuals when needed. In any issue of dispute the eldership would settle it together. So, was this kind of exercising of authority above , beside or beneath others? In relation to any of these specific issues, it could only be "above" others, otherwise it would not be a specific or distinct authority.

June 13 at 9:55pm · [Like](#) · 1

•
John Muir Rob Dolby - if the 'role' of pastor suggests sheep, what about apostle, prophet, teacher, evangelist ? and these 'roles' were all for the body as well, according to Eph 4:11-13.

Yesterday at 12:11am · [Like](#)

•
Dan Beaty Rob, you raise a point that I think was suggested in the OP. I too am concerned that there might be a lack of humility in some who oppose the idea of leadership in the local assembly.

At the same time, I believe that a lack of the humility that 1 Peter describes in the elders might be part of the reason we have this problem. Having been an elder in a small church in the eighties and nineties, I came under the conviction that I failed to see myself as a servant for most of those years. The very fact of being ordained an elder changed me, making me feel more important than I really was. It also robbed me of the simplicity of my relationship in Christ, and cast a weight over me that I was not ready for. So maybe I am not really objective as I could be, but I cannot go back to that system of thinking ever.

Yesterday at 8:51am · [Like](#) · 4

•
Rob Dolby John, I do agree these are gifts that people possess. Many, see the pastor-teacher gift as one gift. If this view is correct (may not be of course) then I

would see Elders being the ones primarily functioning in these gifts as we gather together. The evangelist gift, and often even the apostle, function outside of the local gatherings many times to unsaved so no real authority questions there. If my analogy is correct that if there are shepherd and so there are sheep, I guess if teacher is a separate gift then teacher - student would be similar also. Certainly Paul had authority and often choose to act lovingly and patiently and persuade from scripture where true authority derives from. Of course I'm not identifying a person with a apostle gift in the same class as The Apostles.

Yesterday at 9:26am · [Like](#)

•
Rob Dolby Dan, I understand your concern. We can get of track too far either way. Elder authority, in my opinion, is primarily in their recognized Christian maturity (by the assembly) and in their ability to rightly divide the word of truth. The plurality of Elders we see in N.T. Is also a good guard against the power hungry. I will not rehash it all here again. But at 23 I was pastoring and thought I was Gods spokesman for my entire city. Humble I was not, nor did I know scripture (focussed almost exclusively on the Holy Spirit directly leading me) very well only being saved for 5 years. But life, the Holy Spirit and most importantly scripture has a way of humbling you. I feel I have a shepherd gift. I also know that if I were to walk in the average room full of people I would likely be the most Biblically literate. That's just a fact. I'm not the smartest, or the most wealthy, or best looking etc. I feel that I still remain teachable. And I want to know the truth of Gods word when I'm in error . In a Christian gathering you need people like me . That is not to say that others gifts are not important. I often participated in our house church by being silent for the majority of the time. But to say everyone is on the same level as far as value to the gathering is crazy. Those that labor in word are worthy of double honor. We should value the men who have spent time in the Bible and who encourage us to respect, love, and spend time in scripture for ourselves.

Yesterday at 9:49am · [Like](#) · 1

•
Wesley Rostoll I just posted my new blog on this topic as promised on the main page in this group. It's not quite a thesis but does address some things which have not properly been addressed or answered in this thread.

Yesterday at 4:08pm · [Unlike](#) · 1

•
Wayne ODonnell Thanks for following thru with that, [Wesley](#). In case anyone doesn't know they can find the blog on this wall or on Wesley's wall.

You mentioned that churches were often planted and then left to themselves without any elders for months or years. I know about the churches left without elders on the first missionary journey to the Gentiles which Paul then ordained elders for at the

start of the second missionary journey. What are the many other recorded times? (I do need to acquaint myself with more organic church literature but till I get the time I'll just ask.)

I was disappointed in a few things. First, of the 3 family relationships Paul mentions together in both Ephesians and Colossians, husband/wife, parent/child, master-employer/servant-employee, all of which seem to be a group of similar things, you only mentioned the husband/wife relationship and then proceeded to show that it's not really a positional/hierarchical authority relationship. Do you also think the parent/child and employer/employee relationships are not positional/hierarchical authority relationships?

Secondly, you didn't deal at all with Jesus' eternal Father/Son hierarchy in the Godhead. Do you agree with what I posted above that the Father/Son relationship in the Godhead is a positional/hierarchical one? If so it would have been better to mention that fact to your readers, like "Now in the Godhead the Father and Son exist eternally in a positional/hierarchical relationship, which shows that these kinds of relationships are very good in themselves, but because the church is made up of sinful, fallible men God choose not to institute the same kind of structure in the church." But as [Ian](#) said above, I would expect that God would want the same godly principles operating in His body as in himself and would expect him to have made it very clear in the NT if love and submission in the church is supposed to be different than love and submission in himself.

I guess at least you believe the ruler/citizen relationship is positional/hierarchical, but bad, though ordained by God, as also does Frank Viola, since you said we wouldn't want the church to be like that. Also, I assume you believe the 12 apostles authority was also only functional/non-hierarchical, like the elders?

20 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

•
[Wesley Rostoll](#) Hi [Wayne ODonnell](#). Typing on my phone so will keep this short. I will have to refer to some old books regarding the selecting of elders and get back to u on that one. If I remember correctly, 1 tim was written about 12 years after the church in Ephesus was established (Acts 18-19). Regardless, if u have a new church in a new locale its going to take time for people to grow, for people to get to know one another and for 'leaders' to emerge. I never spoke about business hierarchy because it runs counter to how the kingdom of God operates, its comparing apples to shoes (or something random). I do believe family structures reflect the body of Christ. There are young (and unwise) and parents (wise) in equal but varying roles. Children are to honor and obey there parents (because they should know better) but not if it causes them to disobey God. If my phone rings and I ask my son to say "Im not home" he should rather obey God, and if Im humble enough, I will recognize my error and apologize. I think church family operates the same way. Does that make sense?

I purposefully left out the Trinity argument because I'm still figuring that one out. I do lean toward non-hierarchy, Jesus submits to the Father certainly but that does not make Him less authoritative surely? One will, one God.

Not to be contentious but I'm curious as to how you would interpret Mark 10:42 in defending 'authority over' relationships in the church specifically?

20 hrs · [Unlike](#) · 1

•
Wayne O'Donnell And just for completeness, you left out the 3rd of the twice grouped family relationships. Master-employer/servant-employee (depending on the situation or contract). Do we also obey our employer (so long as it doesn't cause us to disobey God) because he is smarter than we are and not because of our position as a servant/employee? (When you get time, and I'll take a look at 1Tim and get back to you re Mk10.)

20 hrs · [Edited](#) · [Like](#)

•
Wesley Rostoll Oh yes. Employer/employee is hierarchical and we carry out our duties or give instructions as per our organizational position. I have no problem with that at all.

19 hrs · [Like](#)

•
Timothy Halls

10 hrs · [Like](#) · 1

Wayne ODonnell Wesley, please check on the 1Tim thing when you get time. I don't see where that's coming from. You probably should not imply in your blog that the scripture says churches were often left without elders if that's based instead on your reasoning that it would make sense for that to happen.

The three family relationships are mentioned together in the same order in two places and the three relationships certainly seem parallel to each other in the texts. They are obviously the same kind of relationships. Eph5ff: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands ... as unto the Lord ... as the church is subject unto Christ ... that she reverence her husband. ... Children, obey your parents ... in the Lord ... honour thy father and mother. ... Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters ... as unto Christ ... as the servants of Christ ... as to the Lord." Col: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands ... as it is fit in the Lord. Children, obey your parents in all things ... unto the Lord. Servants, obey in all things your masters ... as to the Lord." How can you say that the husband/wife and parent/child relationships are merely functional/non-heirarchical relationships and the employer/employee relationship is a positional/heirarchical relationship expositively, based on an exegesis of those passages (versus your own thoughts), when they all sound so similar in the texts? Especially the parent/child and employer/employee relationships: Eph: "Children, obey ... in the Lord ... Servants, be obedient ... as to the Lord." Col: Children, obey ... unto the Lord. Servants, obey ... as to the Lord." Does it really sound like children are obeying functionally and non-heirarchically while servants are obeying positionally and hierarchically? It's the same word: obey. How could God have said it more plainly if he wanted us to know that they are both positional/heirarchical relationships?

And these verses further link together the husband/wife and parent/child relationships, 1Tim: Elders are to "rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity ... Likewise deacons ... rule their children and their own houses well." Where is the mutual submission in that? Why aren't wives told to rule their husbands and children?

And how can you say that children are supposed to obey their parents for functional rather than positional reasons because parents are more mature? What if the dad is a no good selfish slacker and some other adult is more mature? Should the child obey the other adult instead of his dad?

9 hrs · Edited · Like · 3

Ian Vincent Good points. Also worth noting that secular authority/authorities are in relation to secular things, not spiritual, hence no problem with hierarchies or titles. Business or work relationships are contractual. Parental and Marriage relationships

are not contractual, so they are a little similar to church/body relationships, which are holy, and not contractual.

11 hrs · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls I think you are reading this stuff back into the scriptures. It is hard to listen, and allow the scriptures to question our mentalities about positional authority that are fruit of the need by military and corporate world for such structures. It is possible to find it in the scriptures but only by coming from a modern perspective. It is subjective.

22 mins · Edited · [Like](#)

Ian Vincent I think your false accusation that every one except you is "reading things into the scriptures" is getting a tad tedious.

10 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls I know.

10 hrs · [Like](#)

Timothy Halls We are brothers, though, and we both long to respect the scriptures as the Word of God. I just think that the way the Word of God comes to us is important and that it is a tool that God uses to call us to account. I don't think God intends it to be used as a tool for supporting a philosophical or organizational principle I bring to it.

10 hrs · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls I am not always good at that, so I appreciate your pushing back without fear. I take that as part of God's word to me. Blessings.

10 hrs · [Like](#) · 1

Timothy Halls By the way, [Ian Vincent](#), I think you would appreciate the commitments expressed by my friend Jon Huckins. So I just posted it in this group. Obviously, our commitment to listening to the Word of God is at the core.

10 hrs · Edited · [Like](#)

Wesley Rostoll Hi [Wayne ODonnell](#)

In Acts 14 we read of 4 churches established in Galatia. Paul and Barnabas leave each one after a short time but later on return (v 21) and in only verse 23 do they acknowledge elders in each city. This was not done as soon as the churches were planted because how do you appoint elders among a house full of brand new believers? 1 Corinthians, Romans and Colossians were all written to churches that were about 6 years old, why do they never mention elders? We can't be sure but it seems strange, my best guess is that none had yet been appointed.

Let me try approach this another way, Christ gave us an example (John 13) to follow by being a servant to all. When do we ever see Him who 'has been given all authority in heaven and earth' controlling others? Hierarchy is all about control.

When the bible speaks about submitting to others, whether it be to husbands (Eph 5:22), to parents (6:1), to masters (6:5) or to one another (5:21) I believe that it is calling us to imitate Christ. How the institutional church interprets this is, "I the man am the decision maker around here, I have the authority and what I say goes".

Surely the focus of Ephesians should be on loving our wives and families as Christ loved the church. If I get this right then my wife and children and the younger members in the church will happily submit.

He who is given much has not acquired much (power, possessions etc) but much will be required of him. I feel these are the bigger issues than the semantics behind the words that we are disagreeing on.

7 hrs · [Unlike](#) · 1

Ian Vincent For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (Titus 1:5)This tells us that these particular churches were initially functioning without the recognition of elders. Titus was supposed to go there and recognize those who were functioning as elders, yet without recognition (and this is one test of character, that a man will serve willingly even without recognition or support). Titus simply acknowledges that they are already functioning as elders, that is what ordination means. Paul tells him the qualities to look for, and then on that basis alone recognize them as elders before the congregations. Paul says that the non-recognition of these elders is something which is lacking, so that's why he sent Titus.So, churches can begin without recognized elders, but it is God's will that any elders functioning as elders be recognized. This opens the door to a very controversial subject: Who is qualified to ordain/recognize elders today? In lieu of apostles, can congregations themselves give the recognition?

6 hrs · Edited · [Like](#) · 2

Timothy Halls You assume that a NT pattern of church organization and governance exists, and that Paul somehow has the authority to create and implement it. Then you look in the Bible to find it, and you end up needing to read between the lines to figure out part of the pattern that the "manual" apparently leaves out. You also have to do some explaining because two NT words work similarly in English but are very different and distinguishable for NT readers and writers (though obviously used in a similar way). If you begin with the idea of an office, then you have to decide if Presbyteros and episkopos refer to the same or a different office.

It would be less violent to the text to read Titus as a whole, as presented to us, rather than as a manual, and seek understand the life of the community that is emerging from the entry of the gospel into Crete--and the good and bad choices they can make about how they grow and who they listen to. Why did Paul use the idea of episkopos to help shape the community? What kind of people were forming the community before he deployed Titus with a task to reform what had gotten off to a rough start?

2 hrs · Edited · Like · 1

Dan Beaty There have been some interesting points made from both sides of positional verses functional leadership. Jesus was clear, however that the kind of authority the governments in the world was not to be exercised among us.

I have reposted an older essay on authority that you all might want to read and comment on: <http://livingtruth.com/kingdom-authority/>

Kingdom Authority

In these past few weeks we have been underscoring the fact that the great emphasis of Jesus in His earthly...

LIVINGTRUTH.COM

1 hr · Like · 1

Ross Rohde I'm going to close this thread down. In reality we are going around in circles. I'd like all of us to consider an issues called confirmation bias.

Confirmation Bias:

The tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or

theories.

As I stated, we are going to close this thread down. Please don't post on this again. Eventually this topic will come up again, so it is not like all conversation on this subject is being silenced. But it is time to give it a rest.

Also, I did get some complaints about ad hominem argument. That is, so and so said... and they are wrong, etc. Let's just discuss the topics and keep away from allowing it to get personal. I include myself in this admonition.

I'll leave the thread up, but, again, please don't continue posting. If we do, I'll delete the thread. I will go back and take out at least some of the posts I got complaints about.

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