



# Welcome!

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## WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sunday, September 26, 2021

### How Should Men Organize Themselves to Lead in the Absence of Elders?

Last week we established that in the absence of an eldership, congregations should look to another model for church leadership already at work in the church: the model of leadership by Christian men (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; cf. Ephesians 5:25; 6:1). At the same time, we discussed that God does not want the church to be governed by a pseudo-eldership, a democratic process, or a denominational pastoral model. Keeping this in mind, how can Christian men organize themselves to lead a local church without appointing a body of leaders from amongst themselves, without voting, and without providing undue attention to any individual in their midst? In short, I'm going to suggest that **Christian men should establish open lines of communication amongst themselves and the church they lead, punctuated by in-person, decision making meetings governed by the principle of consensus.**

Communication is the lifeblood of the human body, which itself serves as a model for the church (1 Corinthians 12:12). The human body works towards a unified purpose as directed by its head and controlled by its nervous system. That purpose yields at times to the input received from the various members of the body. Christian men cannot replace the Head of the church, Jesus (Ephesians 1:22-23), but they can function as a nervous system in His church body, 1) establishing clear communication pathways amongst themselves; 2) relaying a clear direction for the congregation from Jesus that all can see; 3) establishing some means so that those being led can offer feedback and input.

That second point demands further inspection. While some of the direction Jesus relays to us is not open to discussion or debate, some things have been left for Christians and local churches to decide for themselves. The Bible uses terms like "liberty" to describe these things and encourages Christians to choose a path with them that is both helpful and edifying (1 Corinthians 10:23). Normally, elders would make decisions for the local church in these areas. Without elders, how can Christian men do so?

Acts 15 provides some insight into how first-century Christian men dealt with issues that required a decision to be made. First, they met in person and discussed issues using Biblical principles as their guide. Second, they reached a Biblical decision through consensus. Third, they conveyed what they had decided to the church at large. While the situation underlying Acts 15 was unique in many ways, it stands to reason that these same basic principles would work for Christian men today. In fact, the men of many congregations without elders determine to have at least monthly in-person meetings to make decisions for the local church with ad hoc meetings as needs arise.

Within these meetings, how are decisions made without resorting to a democratic process? Reflecting once again on Acts 15, the brethren there in Jerusalem did not call the matter of their discussion to a vote. Instead, they worked to unity and consensus through discussion. This wasn't easy; in fact, the Bible says that the meeting in Jerusalem began with "much dispute" (Acts 15:7). They didn't give up though. They realized what we should: given that Christ prayed for and pleaded for unity among Christians (John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10), it is only reasonable that Christians should do whatever they can to achieve it. Christian men should strive to make decisions for the local church based on consensus.

Several principles can help Christians both to achieve consensus and make good decisions. We'll discuss some of these principles next week.