

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

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Now that we have a brief comprehension on how the church was started, how it began to spread, its distinct characteristics, and a brief history of it, we should now look at how churches should operate and be planted in our days. Shubal Stearns and the Sandy Creek Separate Baptist church had the right concept about church growth. Basically, they said that the way to multiply was to divide. As soon as they would get another preacher in the church, they would send him, with some members, to another area in order to see a church birthed. These members would sit as a congregation until one was formed and a church was constituted. Churches spread rapidly with this concept.

In planting churches, we should have the right structure or method of operation. From the church at Antioch to others, the same principles were used in their function. A brief outline of this thought is:

- I. The Advancement of the Local Church
 - A. Evangelize
 - B. Baptize
 - C. Stabilize
- II. The Authority of the Local Church
 - A. Authority to Address Problems
 - B. Authority to Appoint Preachers
- III. The Accountability to the Local Church
 - A. The Conversation to the Local Church
 - B. The Confirming of the Local Church

We will look at this order, starting with the church at Antioch (the example), and then move on to the churches that Paul was used of God to plant. Remember, God is a God of order (I Corinthians 14:40- *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”*), and He expects His churches to be in Biblical order. When Paul planned to come to Corinth, he was determined to set things in order (I Corinthians 11:34- *“...And the rest will I set in order when I come.”*). Even Paul’s admonition to Titus dealt with setting the churches at Crete in order (Titus 1:5- *“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:”*). Therefore, let us look at the proper order or structure for the local church.

When God chose to birth a church at Antioch and extend the outreach of the church at Jerusalem, He selected three methods. The saints at Jerusalem were to evangelize, baptize, and then stabilize the new converts.

Church planting was practiced in a way that we do not see it today. In the early churches, preachers would be sent by their local church and go to an area where no one was. There they would begin to evangelize that specific area. This was what Paul was referring to in Romans 15:20. *“Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:”* When it comes to evangelization, this is the only method to use.

In the times we are living preachers build their works from splits off other churches. They know how to proselyte dissatisfied members and persuade them to join their church. We do not have genuine evangelization presently, just church-hoppers building churches as they hop from here to there. Pastors should put a stop to this. They should make it a practice that, when a member from another church visits theirs, they should contact the

pastor of that member. He should find out why this member is visiting their church. If he, through the conversation with the member's pastor, finds out that the member is not on good terms with the pastor or the church should not accept their application for membership. This may seem foreign in these last days, but it is right. One thing about dissident church members, they will cause problems everywhere they go. It will not be long after they join their "new church" that the honeymoon will be over and they will resort back to their old devilish ways. No member should be accepted into membership in a local congregation unless their current pastor recommends them.

The saints at Jerusalem came to an area where there was not a church. The locality was Antioch. When they arrived, they began to preach the Word and magnified the Lord Jesus to the hearers. Preaching is the only form of evangelization that we should use. God endorsed preaching to evangelize the world and not puppet shows, movies, dramas, or singings. Therefore, they had God's hand on them. After the preaching was over, a great number believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and turned to Him. Hence, preaching of God's Word is the means of evangelization.

Although it is not recorded in Acts 11, these converts were baptized, since that was the great command as found in Matthew 28:19. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"* This commenced the beginning of another local New Testament church.

Once sinners were saved and baptized, the stabilization process began. The tidings of the great news was reported back to the church at Jerusalem. Because of their authority, they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived at Antioch and saw the grace of God manifested in their lives, he began to exhort them. Barnabas admonished them to cleave to the Lord. Shortly, Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Saul (Paul) and bring him to this great work at Antioch. When they arrived back, they began to assemble themselves with the congregation and taught them sound doctrine from the Scriptures. This continued for one year. Great was the effect of Bible doctrine in their lives that even sinners called them Christians. The new converts were stabilized.

Certainly, this is what we should also do in our times. In many instances saints lead sinners to the Lord and never disciple them. The advancement of the local church is not complete until the new believer in Christ has been stabilized in the Word of God.

The church at Antioch was constituted by the church at Jerusalem. In simple terms, Jerusalem was the "mother church" and Antioch was the "sister church". Jerusalem was the church planter and Antioch was the church planted. With this in mind, we see that Jerusalem had authority over the newly established work. They had the right to address the problems at Antioch and they had the entitlement to appoint the preacher. This is known as local church authority and its relation to church planting.

Addressing problems in the mother/sister church relationship can be seen in the future churches Paul would plant. However, it was the church at Antioch where we first see the authority of the local church and their right to appoint the preacher of the church plant. Even in their commencement, Jerusalem sent them Barnabas to take over the work (Acts 11:22- *"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch."*).

The proper steps to receive a pastor are, after converts are formed, then their preacher is appointed. Antioch was not a church until they acquired their pastor. In Acts 11:26, we see that the term "church" was not applied to Antioch until Barnabas came (Acts 11:22-

24). They were added to the Lord (Acts 11:24- “...*much people was added unto the Lord.*”) before they received their pastor, and after they had a pastor, they were considered a local church (Acts 11:26- “...*they assembled themselves with the church...*”).

Lastly, we observe the accountability of Antioch to Jerusalem. They were responsible to converse with Jerusalem. This idea is perceived in Acts 11:22. When God moved at Antioch, then the “*tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem*”. Why did the saints at Antioch have to send tidings to Jerusalem? The reason for this is accountability. Until the newly planted church is fully mature, it should remain answerable to its “mother church”. Apparently, the explanation for this procedure is so that the new ministry will remain sound in their doctrine and Scriptural in their practices. There is an obligation of oversight on the part of the “mother church”.

The churches at Galatia would do well to illustrate this point. Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were all established on Paul’s first missionary journey. After Paul’s departure and before his second journey, the church went into false doctrine. From the temptation to preach another gospel to the subject of circumcision, the Galatians were being tossed back and forth with every wind of doctrine. Since Paul was the temporal figure placed in their lives for authority (his authority came from Antioch), he wrote an epistle to them in order to correct their error. This is the reason we have the epistle of Galatians. Local church accountability can also be seen in Corinth and the epistle written to them. In conclusion, the only people that would have a problem with being accountable to the “mother church” are rebels that will not let anyone tell them what to do.

Antioch matured rapidly, and in Acts 13, they began to send out preachers. This “sister church” had developed into a “mother church”. Now we begin to see the Scriptural structure manifested through the ministry at Antioch (The Advancement of the Local Church, The Authority of the Local Church, and The Accountability to the Local Church).

The church at Antioch began to evangelize through preaching the Word and maintaining a powerful witness. Powerful preaching automatically resulted in the powerful witness. The men were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 13:9, 13:52, 16:6, 16:10, 18:9-10, and 20:22) and God used them mightily. Every church should build their congregation around preaching. What we need today is preaching! Robert T. Boyd described the type of preaching that we need in a poem titled “Preach the Bible”.

“I am greatly disappointed with some preachers of today,
With their logic and their ethics, their aristocratic way;
With their science and their theories and their new theology,
Full of everything but Jesus and His love for you and me.

There is plenty in the Bible for preachers of today
If they will but search its pages and for help Divine would pray;
For God’s Word is everlasting—it never will grow old,
‘Tis indeed a priceless treasure—far more precious than gold.

If the preachers in our churches would preach Jesus crucified,
How through love for us He suffered and through love for us He died,

Then our lives would not be empty as so many are today,
But be filled to overflowing in a Pentecostal way!

What we need is just plain gospel, in the good old-fashioned way,
Place of Emerson and Shakespeare, or topics of the day.
What care we for all their sayings, or teachings true and tried?
We want the dear old story of the Savior crucified!

What we need is consecration in a good true man of God,
With a Bible education, and a love for God's dear Word;
Who can lead us and direct us to the Truth, the Life, the Way,
Who brings peace to soul and body through the burdens of the day.

This alone can save the sinner, this alone can set men free,
Just the precious dear old story of God's love for you and me;
That is what the people's needing, that is where the crowds'll be,
Where they hear the same old story that they heard at mother's knee." (1)

If preachers would only preach the Word, mighty works could be accomplished for the cause of Christ. Every pastor should take their congregation on a journey through the pages of the Bible every time they preach.

“With the Holy Spirit as my Guide, I entered this wonderful Temple called the Bible. I entered the portico of Genesis, walked down through the Old Testament art gallery, where pictures of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Isaac, Jacob, and Daniel hung upon the wall. I passed into the music room of Psalms, where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth a dirge like wail of the weeping prophet Jeremiah to the grand, impassioned strain of Isaiah, until it seemed that every reed and pipe in God's great organ of nature responded to the tuneful harp of David, the sweet singer of Israel. I entered the beautiful chapel of Ecclesiastes, where the preacher's voice was heard, and into the conservatory room of Sharon, and the Lily of the Valley's sweet scented spices filled and perfumed my life. I entered the business office of Proverbs, then into the observatory room of the Prophets, where I saw telescopes of various sizes, was pointed to far-off events, but all concentrated upon the Bright and Morning Star which was to rise above all the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation.

I entered the audience-room of the King of kings, and caught a vision of His glory from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; passing on into the Acts of the Apostles, where the Holy Spirit was performing His work in forming the infant church. Then into the correspondence room, where sat Saints Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude penning their letters. I stepped into the throne room of Revelation, where all towered in glittering peaks and I got a vision of the King sitting upon His throne in all His glory, and I cried:

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.” (2)

All that new converts need is a Spirit-filled man of God to expound to them the blessed old Book. The Spirit will take the truth and guide the new believer into all truth and righteousness.

“This Book, which we call the Bible, contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibilities, rewards the greatest labors, and condemns all who trifle with its contents.” (3)

This was the mentality of the preachers sent out of the church at Antioch. Everywhere they went, they were preaching. Whether it is beside a river, in a synagogue, or in a jail, they preached the Word! Notice the instances of their powerful preaching.

1. Acts 13:5- “*And when they were at Salamis, they **preached** the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.*”
2. Acts 13:15-16- “*And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, **saying**, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.*”
3. Acts 13:42- “*And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be **preached** to them the next sabbath.*”
4. Acts 13:46- “*Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been **spoken** to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*”
5. Acts 14:1- “*And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so **spake**, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.*”

6. Acts 14:3- *“Long time therefore abode they **speaking boldly** in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”*
7. Acts 14:7- *“And there they **preached** the gospel.”*
8. Acts 14:21- *“And when they had **preached** the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,”*
9. Acts 14:25- *“And when they had **preached** the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:”*
10. Acts 15:35- *“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, **teaching and preaching** the word of the Lord, with many others also.”*
11. Acts 16:32- *“And they **spake** unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.”*
12. Acts 17:2-3- *“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I **preach** unto you, is Christ.”*
13. Acts 17:13- *“But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was **preached** of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.”*
14. Acts 20:7- *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul **preached** unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his **speech** until midnight.”*
15. Acts 20:9- *“And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was **long preaching**, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.”*
16. Acts 20:11- *“When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and **talked a long while**, even till break of day, so he departed.”*

From these verses, and others, we may conclude that the church at Antioch realized that the first means of advancing their church was by evangelization through preaching. Nothing can take the place of Spirit-filled preaching!

Church members should realize the great task that their pastor has been given. They should support him in every way possible so that he can fulfill what God intends for him. Many times, they do not know the trials and afflictions of their pastor in the ministry. Therefore, instead of adding more burdens to the man of God, they should help him carry the load.

“Have you ever tried to preach one hundred and four sermons a year to the same congregation? Have you ever tried to please all the members of your church? Have you ever tried to lead a prayer meeting week after week when one hundred and twenty five of the one hundred and fifty members were absent? Have you ever tried to visit all the newcomers in your community; all the sick at home and in the hospital of your congregation; the lost in your neighborhoods, in about sixty-five homes of the members;

and attend all the committee and extra church meetings—all in twelve months. (Pity the pastor who has a much larger church!) Have you ever had to lead when no one would follow? Have you ever tried to get a little man to do a big job, or a big man to do a small job? Have you ever tried to carry the weight of a lost world, plus the weight of your own church and community? Have you ever tried to love when others hate, or praise when others condemn? Have you ever tried to bind up broken hearts or re-establish broken homes? Have you ever tried to sympathize with and help fallen men and women when others seem not to care and even mock? Have you ever tried to smile upon empty collection plates and realize that the world is moving away from God? Have you ever tried to pour out your very own soul to get men to give themselves to Christ and have no response? If not, then you cannot know what it means to be the pastor of a church. It is no wonder that Paul, a pastor himself, offered ‘mercy’ to his fellow-pastors” (4)

Your pastor must face these things (dear reader) in the ministry. Not only does he need to tend to these things, he also has a family, financial needs, and feelings too. The man of God must face many things while serving Christ in the local church.

“If you can preach when scowling faces meet your gaze;
If you can smile when frowns are evident apace;
If you can scatter cheer, and sullen gloom supplant;
If you can give the pessimist a different ‘slant’;
If you can still press on when every move is blocked;
If you can tilt your chin when So-and-so has ‘balked’;
If you can take ‘dictation’ from the ‘powers that be’;
If you can rise above the petty things you see;
If you can plan for bigger things and stand alone;
If you can rest your weary head upon a stone;
If you can grip the hand which dealt the cruel blow;
If you can walk ‘the second mile’ and love bestow;
If you can weep with saddened souls who truly weep;
If you can laugh with those whose festive hours keep;
If you can stick, let come what may, to God’s own Book;
If you can to its sacred pages ever look;
If you can say, ‘Thus saith the Lord!’ and know it’s true;
If you can love the Gentile and the Jew;
If you can preach on Sunday with an empty purse;
If you can make your shabby suit look ‘none the worse’;
If you can drive your ancient car with self-respect;
If you can ‘let them pass’ and keep your head erect;
If you can thrill at being loved for Jesus’ sake;
If you can play the hectic game of give and take;
If you can lead the sinner to the cleansing flood;
If you can preach redemption through the precious blood;

If you can build for time and eternity;
If you can say at last, 'Thine shall the glory be!';
If you can do all this, O mortal creature,
You are in fact—as well as name—a worthy preacher!" (5)

Being a pastor is almost like living your life in a fishbowl. Everyone, but the pastor, knows what he should do. Congregations seek many things in a pastor.

"The strength of an eagle,
The grace of a swan,
The gentleness of a dove,
The friendliness of a cat-bird,
The cheerfulness of a robin,
The assurance of a barnyard fowl,
The industry of a sparrow,
The patience of turkey-buzzards,
And the night hours of an owl.
They expect him to live
On the food of a canary!" (6)

Sometimes congregations complain about the preacher being double-minded. He is the only one that cannot change his thinking about anything. However, really the church member is unsettled in their life. Notice the afflictions that you bring on your pastor with this attitude.

1. "If he is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is gray, he is too old
2. If he has five or six children, he has too many; if he has none, he is setting a bad example
3. If his wife sings in the choir, she is being forward; if she doesn't, she isn't interested in her husband's work
4. If he speaks from notes, he has canned sermons and is dry; if he is extemporaneous, he is not deep
5. If he spends too much time in the study, he neglects his people; if he visits, he is a gadabout
6. If he is attentive to the poor, he is playing to the grandstand; if to the wealthy, he is trying to be an aristocrat
7. If he suggests improvements for the Church, he is a dictator; if he makes no suggestions, he is a figurehead
8. If he uses too many illustrations, he neglects his Bible; if not enough, he is not clear
9. If he condemns wrong, he is cranky; if he does not, he is a compromiser
10. If he preaches an hour, he is windy; if less, he is lazy
11. If he preaches the Truth, he is offensive; if not, he is a hypocrite
12. If he fails to please everybody, he is hurting the Church; if he does please everybody, he has no convictions

13. If he preaches tithing, he is a money-grabber; if he does not, he is failing to develop his people
14. If he receives a large salary, he is mercenary; if a small salary, it proves he is not worth much
15. If he preaches all the time, the people get tired of hearing one man; if he invites guest preachers, he is shirking responsibility” (7)

This type of church member can really discourage their pastor from preaching the Word of God. Here are a few more helpful points in discouraging you pastor.

1. “Don’t attend the Sunday evening service or prayer meeting
2. Go to church when ‘convenient’
3. Habitually come late, and always sit just inside the door
4. Don’t give him your attention, but always whisper
5. Act cold to show your dignity
6. Never appreciate his efforts
7. Tell him what wonderful messages you have heard elsewhere
8. Always have ‘roast preacher’ for Sunday dinner, criticizing him before your children
9. Don’t make him welcome in your home; leave the T.V. full blast, even when he prays (or tries to)
10. Accuse his wife of running things
11. Don’t pray for him, and never offer to help
12. Always do the opposite of what he suggests
13. Get your ‘gang’ together to oppose him in business meetings
14. Don’t take your Sunday guests to hear him” (8)

When you really get tired of hearing you pastor preach and want him to “hit the road”, here are some hints to help him on his way. (Remember, your membership can be moved for just the price of a stamp, but moving his family will cost between \$2,000 to \$3,000.)

1. “Look him straight in the eye when he is preaching and say ‘amen’ once in awhile. He’ll preach himself to death in a few weeks!
2. Pat him on the back and brag on his good points. He’ll soon work himself to death!
3. Start paying him a living wage. Perhaps he’s one of those preachers who has gone on starvation wages for so long he’d eat enough to kill him if he ever got the chance!
4. Rededicate your life to Christ and ask your Pastor for a job (preferably the name of some lost one you could win to Christ). He’ll die of heart failure!
5. Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher and he’ll soon become so effective that some larger church will take him off your hands!” (9)

Although these were humorous selections concerning the pastor, many times they are true. Church members should pay (I Timothy 5:17-18, I Corinthians 9:9-14, and Philippians 4:14-19), pray for (I Thessalonians 5:25, II Thessalonians 3:1), and pursue

their pastor (I Corinthians 11:1, I Corinthians 4:16, Philippians 3:17, I Thessalonians 1:6, II Thessalonians 3:7, 9, Hebrews 13:7, 17).

The second act that the preachers from Antioch performed in the advancement of their local church was to baptize the converts from their preaching. Although not all the new believers are mentioned, the first person recorded that was baptized was Lydia (Acts 16:15- *“And when she was **baptized**, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”*). Then, the jailor was baptized (Acts 16:33- *“And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was **baptized**, he and all his, straightway.”*). There was also mentioned the converts at Corinth (Acts 18:8- *“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were **baptized**.”*). Finally, certain disciples at Ephesus were recorded as being baptized in Paul’s third missionary journey (Acts 19:5- *“When they heard this, they were **baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*).

Then, the final idea of advancing the local church, stabilizing, was performed by Paul and his company from Antioch. He put into practice what he later told Timothy in II Timothy 2:2. *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”* A suggested list of this is as follows.

1. Acts 14:21- *“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had **taught many**, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,”*
2. Acts 15:35- *“Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, **teaching** and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”*
3. Acts 16:4-5- *“And as they went through the cities, they **delivered them the decrees for to keep**, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches **established in the faith**, and increased in number daily.”*
4. Acts 18:11- *“And he continued there a year and six months, **teaching** the word of God among them.”*

After studying the book of Acts, we also can notice the authority, which they possessed. When it came to problems within the church at Antioch (Acts 15), their “mother church” handled it (Jerusalem). However, when it came to troubles with churches planted out of Antioch, then, Antioch handled them.

When Paul returned to Antioch after his first journey, he noticed that false doctrine crept in. The problem was that certain men came from Judea and taught that you could not be saved except you were circumcised after the manner of Moses. Paul and Barnabas disputed this matter in the church to the point that the church recommended them to return to Jerusalem (their “mother church”) for help.

Paul, Barnabas, and certain others returned to Jerusalem (their “mother church”) to the apostles and elders. Arriving at Jerusalem, they gave a report to them about the mighty works at Antioch and their first missionary endeavors.

Apparently, the matter of circumcision was raging at Jerusalem also. When the apostles and elders came together to consider this debate, disputation arose. Peter gave a word of admonition. Then, Barnabas and Paul declared the miracles and wonders God

wrought among the Gentiles through them (revealing that God can save uncircumcised people—the Gentiles). Finally, James (who is believed to be the pastor at that time) began his speech. Once Pastor James had the final word on the issue, the apostles and elders submitted to his authority and sent people back to Antioch. Paul, Barnabas, Judas, Silas, and chosen men went back to Antioch as an authority of Jerusalem to handle problems at Antioch.

After arriving at Antioch, an epistle was delivered to them. After the reading of it, they rejoiced because it consoled their troubled soul. Some feel that the epistle that was delivered was Galatians. The problem ceased to exist while Paul and Barnabas continued there some time preaching and teaching the Word of God.

Time came for Paul and Barnabas to go on another missionary journey. Barnabas determined to take John Mark with them. Paul did not want him to come because he departed from them in their first journey. Contention began to mount between Paul and Barnabas to the point that the matter caused them to depart from one another. Who was to handle this problem? Certainly, God intended for the missionary efforts to continue!

As we see in Acts 15:40, Paul was recommended by the brethren at Antioch to continue on his journeys. Antioch was able to handle their problem this time. They did not confer with conventions, boards, or associations for assistance. No other church had the right to tell Antioch what to do but Jerusalem. The problem was handled before it needed to go to Jerusalem, which reveals the authority of the local church. Apart from Jerusalem, any other church had no right to tell Antioch what to do. Again, the doctrine of local church autonomy and independence is exemplified.

One question remains. What happened to the dissenter, Barnabas? Apparently, Paul was put in charge with the missionary endeavors. Seemingly, Barnabas bucked against the authority of Paul. This reveals that it is impossible to be blessed of God (even though it seems right—forgiving John Mark) rebelling against authority. Does God bless a split when it is against the one in authority? How many churches are recorded in the Bible that Barnabas “started”?

Another element on local church authority is the ability to appoint preachers over works that have been planted. This is contrary to the modern day “pulpit committee” mentality. Nonetheless, we should follow what the structure for the church is from the Word of God. A list of pastoral appointments is as follows.

1. Acts 13:1-3- *“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the **Holy Ghost said**, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, **they sent them away.**”*
2. Acts 14:23- *“And when they had **ordained them elders** in every church, and had prayed with fasting, **they commended them** to the Lord, on whom they believed.”*
3. Acts 16:1-3- *“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was **well***

- reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. **Him would Paul have to go forth with him**; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.”*
4. I Corinthians 4:17- *“For this cause have **I sent unto you Timotheus**, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”*
 5. II Corinthians 8:16-18- *“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. **And we have sent with him the brother**, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;”*
 6. II Corinthians 12:17-18- *“Did I make a gain of you by any of them **whom I sent unto you**? I desired Titus, and with him **I sent a brother**. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?”*
 7. Ephesians 6:21-22- *“But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, **Tychicus**, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom **I have sent unto you** for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.”*
 8. Philippians 2:19- *“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to **send Timotheus** shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.”*
 9. Philippians 2:23- *“**Him therefore I hope to send** presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.”*
 10. Philippians 2:25- *“Yet I supposed it necessary to **send to you Epaphroditus**, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.”*
 11. Philippians 2:28- *“**I sent him** therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.”*
 12. Colossians 4:7-8- *“All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Whom **I have sent unto you** for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;”*
 13. I Thessalonians 3:2- *“And **sent Timotheus**, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:”*
 14. I Thessalonians 3:5- *“For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, **I sent to know your faith**, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.”*
 15. II Timothy 4:12- *“And **Tychicus have I sent** to Ephesus.”*
 16. Titus 3:12- *“When **I shall send Artemas** unto thee, **or Tychicus**, be diligent to **come unto me** to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.”*

From these verses, and others, we may conclude that preachers should be appointed by their “mother church”. This would solve several problems that occur from the “pulpit committee” situation. In order to do this, there must be an unbroken line of the church as seen in the story of the church. One cannot just “start” a church. Churches are not “started” they are birthed and planted. Any “church” that does not have a “mother church” is not a Scriptural “church”. God builds His church, not splits and cantankerous organizations.

The final element involved in the structure of the church is the accountability to the local church. When churches are planted out of the “mother church”, they should remain accountable to the “mother church” until they have matured into a “mother church” themselves.

When Paul was able, he would report to his sending church and supporting churches. The following is a list of this.

1. Acts 14:26-28- *“And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.”*
2. Acts 15:3- *“And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, **declaring** the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.”*
3. Acts 15:4- *“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and **they declared all things that God had done with them.**”*
4. Acts 15:12- *“Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, **declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.**”*
5. Acts 18:21-22- *“But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means **keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem:** but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, **he went down to Antioch.**”*
6. Acts 19:21- *“After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, **to go to Jerusalem,** saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”*
7. Acts 20:16- *“For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, **to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.**”*
8. Acts 20:22- *“And now, behold, **I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem,** not knowing the things that shall befall me there:”*
9. Acts 21:12-15- *“And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*

*And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. And after those days we took up our carriages, and **went up to Jerusalem.***”

10. Acts 21:17-20- *“And when we were **come to Jerusalem**, the brethren received us gladly. And the **day following Paul went in with us unto James**; and all the **elders were present**. And when he had **saluted them**, he **declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry**. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, *Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:*”*

With these verses in mind, and others, we perceive the importance of communicating with the sending church and supporting churches. Again, there is the local church accountability if one expects the blessings of God on their ministry.

The last element of local church accountability is the “mother church” confirming and checking on the “sister” or planted churches. A suggested list of the verses that support this idea is the following.

1. Acts 14:22- *“**Confirming the souls** of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”*
2. Acts 15:30-32- *“So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, **exhorted the brethren** with many words, and **confirmed them.**”*
3. Acts 15:36- *“And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, **Let us go again** and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and **see how they do.**”*
4. Acts 15:41- *“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, **confirming the churches.**”*
5. Acts 16:4- *“And as they went through the cities, they **delivered them the decrees for to keep**, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”*
6. Acts 16:40- *“And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had **seen the brethren**, they **comforted them**, and departed.”*
7. Acts 18:23- *“And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and **went over all** the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening all the disciples.**”*
8. Acts 20:16-17- *“For Paul had **determined to sail by Ephesus**, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and **called the elders of the church.**”*

Through these verses we see the importance for the “mother church” to keep a check on the “sister churches”. This is not to say that they are a hierarchy, but there is a certain amount of liability that they must maintain. Once again, they should make sure the churches are doctrinally sound and practicing what the Lord told us (Matthew 28:20-*“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”*).

In closing, we see the importance of the structure of the church. If we follow these guidelines, we may spare our churches some heartache. It is the view of the author that churches create problems for themselves that could have been avoided. If they only heeded these God-given plans, they could have enjoyed an overflow of blessings.

END NOTES

1. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, pages 26-27.
2. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, page 19.
3. *Ibid*
4. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, page 597.
5. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, pages 597-598.
6. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, page 560.
7. *Ibid*
8. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, pages 560-561.
9. Robert T. Boyd, World's Bible Handbook, page 561.

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1. Boyd, Robert T., World's Bible Handbook. World Publishing, 1991.