

## God-Revealed Leadership

### What is 'Reformational' or 'Reformed' Theology?

- Definition: All of life lived according to the Word of God, by the grace of God, through faith in the Son of God, united by the Spirit of God, to magnify and enjoy God.
- Big Ideas: God rules and controls all things in creation, salvation, and history (*the sovereignty of God*)  
The Bible is a single, unfolding story of God's saving promises to man (*covenant theology*)  
The church is always striving to bring all of life in line with God's Word (*always reforming*)  
Justification (being *declared* righteous) is distinct from sanctification (being *made* righteous)  
In sanctification, we seek not just to change behavior, but also *to free our hearts from idols*.  
Every Christian needs *membership* in a visible church for discipleship and accountability.

### Review: God-Revealed Worship

- Worship is a joyful, serious response to the gospel with the service of heart and mind, prayer and song.
- Knowing our hearts and minds are infected with sin (Gen. 6:5, Jer. 17:9), the only way we can worship God "in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24) is to use only those means of worship that God tells us to use.
- Every element in Reformational worship traces to elements used in the Bible (*regulative principle*).
- We use liturgy for the sake of decency, order, reverence, and awe (1 Cor. 14:40, Heb. 12:28-29).
- With regard to musical forms and instruments, we exercise Christian liberty and prudence so that our musical offerings *adorn* and *enhance* our worship, without *distracting* or *diverting* from God-centeredness.

### Today: Church Government

- Who leads the visible church of Jesus Christ? How do we get our leaders?
- What authority and responsibilities do they have? Who keeps them accountable? How does all this work?

### Who leads the visible church?

#### *Christ rules through his Word*

- The Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the visible church (Isa. 9:6-7, Mat. 28:18).
- In both the OT and NT, God ruled his church through his Word (Deut. 32:45-47, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

#### *Christ appoints special officers to teach and rule according to his Word*

- In both the OT and NT, God appointed human officers to rule his people according to his Word.
- In the OT, kings were to make their own copy of God's law (Deut. 17:18). Priests and Levites were given the responsibility to teach (Lev. 10:11, Deut. 33:10), and King Jehoshaphat sent out officials and Levites during his reign to teach throughout his kingdom (2 Ch. 17:1-9). God sent numerous prophets preached and wrote in order to minister God's Word to his people (1 Kgs. 18:21-24, Isa. 8:20, etc.)
- In the NT, Jesus empowered the apostles as his special representatives (Mk. 3:14, Acts 1:21-22). The apostles spoke, taught, and wrote with his own authority (Acts 2:42, 1 Tim. 5:18, 2 Pet. 3:14-18).

#### *After the apostles, Christ gives the church elders to teach and rule according to his Word*

- The apostles office was foundational (Eph. 2:20) and temporary (1 Cor 15:8-9).
- However, the apostles also considered themselves as 'elders' (1 Pet. 5:1), and during their own lifetimes welcomed other elders to serve alongside them in overseeing the church (Acts 15:6, 23; 16:4; 20:17).
- This idea of elders overseeing God's people can be traced all the way before the Exodus (Exo. 3:16), became more formalized during the Exodus (Exo. 18:13-26), and continued even in Exile (Eze. 8:1).
- Synagogues in the NT era were ruled by groups of elders (Acts 13:15). Historical sources tell us that these elders were directly elected by the congregation – or appointed by the Sanhedrin with their consent.
- 'Elder' is a translation of the Greek word *presbyteros* – thus the term 'Presbyterian' (rule by elders).

### How do we get our elders?

- Elders are to be men of ability, maturity, and piety (1 Tim. 3:1-7). “Recent converts,” however great their zeal, should not be chosen as elders (1 Tim. 3:6), nor should elders be chosen hastily (1 Tim. 5:22).
- Those under consideration for church office should be trained (2 Tim. 2:2).
- In some cases, the NT records that the apostles or their deputies appointed elders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). But the NT also shows us that congregations had a role in nominating the replacement for Judas among the apostle-elders (Acts 1:15-26), and in electing the first deacons (Acts 6:1-6).
- From these Scriptures, we derive the following practical approach:
  1. Members of the congregation nominate men whom they believe to be qualified.
  2. These nominations then go to the current elders for their consideration of his qualifications.
  3. If the elders concur with the nomination, they speak to the man to see if he is willing to be trained.
  4. Pastors conduct the training both to instruct the man and to help him assess his calling.
  5. When training is finished, if the man feels called to serve, he will be examined by the current elders.
  6. If the current elders approve his examination, they will ‘certify’ him to stand for election.
  7. Once a man is certified for election, the congregation is informed and a meeting planned.
  8. If the congregation votes to elect the man, a time is set for his ordination and installation.

### What authority and responsibilities belong to elders?

- The primary duty of elders is to “pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock” (Acts 20:28), “keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account,” (Heb. 13:17).
- The language of ‘flock’ invokes the image of shepherding, which involves *presence, provision, and protection*. Presence is exercised through regular prayer and visitation (Acts 20:20).
- Provision and protection is primarily spiritual (2 Cor. 10:3-6), and so elders must be “able to teach” in order to counsel, correct, and encourage Christ’s sheep (1 Tim. 3:2; Jn. 21:15, 17; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2).
- Elders must also watch out for and confront those who would harm the church (Titus 3:8-11; Heb. 13:7), exercising discipline against those who will not repent (Mat. 18:15-20, 1 Cor. 5:1-5).
- Those elders who labor full-time in preaching and teaching are called ‘ministers,’ ‘pastors,’ or “teaching elders,” (1 Tim. 5:17). They are to receive their living from the church (1 Cor. 9:14).
- In all things, the elders must “not go beyond what is written” in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6).

### Who keeps the elders accountable?

- Elders always exercise their authority in groups (Mat. 18:20, Acts 15:6, Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 4:14).
- The decisions of local groups of elders may be appealed to wider groups of elders (Acts 15:1-16:4).
- In each congregation, the group of elders is called the *session* (or *consistory*). Each session is in turn accountable to other sessions in their region through the *presbytery* (“council of elders,” 1 Tim. 4:14).
- The presbytery is composed of all the pastors in the geographic region, plus one elder from each local congregation. The presbytery oversees all the pastors and sessions within its boundaries.
- Each presbytery is in turn accountable to other presbyteries through the *general assembly* of our denomination, which meets annually and is composed of pastors and elders elected by the presbyteries.

### How does all this work?

- Your elders and pastors regularly pray for and communicate with you. We enjoy visiting your homes!
- The session meets regularly for accountability, counsel, and decisions that affect the whole congregation.
- The presbytery meets at least twice each year to report and review the work of its pastors and sessions. The presbytery protects the local church from false teaching and spiritual abuse by overseeing the preparation of future pastors, reviewing the work of pastors and local sessions, and handling any appeals or complaints brought to them by against the teaching of pastors or actions of local sessions.
- The general assembly meets yearly to review the work of presbyteries and handle appeals against them.