

2. It is needed to ensure good order in the Church's fulfillment of its functions

Who is to preach the Word?

Who is to administer the ordinances?

Who is to exercise discipline?

Who is to administer the stewardship of the Church's resources?

3. It is needed to prevent the rise of unscriptural forms of government

Unscriptural forms inevitably arise when the scriptural pattern is ignored or rejected. Some forms inevitably hinder or prevent the church from carrying out its functions in a God-ordained manner. For example, a dictatorial pastor who gathers all local church power to himself will hinder the church from developing leadership qualities in its officers. This in turn will hinder the church from exercising its proper prophetic and teaching functions, by denying to able lay persons the opportunity to exercise their gifts and abilities in these areas. And he will almost certainly hinder or prevent the exercise of appropriate church discipline, especially when it concerns his favorites or (especially) himself or his family.

Of course, the possibility of the existence of an informal power structure in the church must always be taken into account. But a visible organizational structure is better than one that is invisible; and the scriptural pattern is always to be preferred above one that is man-made.

4. It becomes increasingly important with the purchase and ownership of church property

D. The Form of Government of the Local Church

1. Scriptural evidence concerning local church government

- a. Local church officers

- (1) Bishop-elder-pastor

- (a) The terms individually considered

Bishop, Overseer, Superintendent (ἐπίσκοπος)

I Peter 2:25 -- "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop (ἐπίσκοπον) of your souls."

Philippians 1:1 -- "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (ἐπισκόποις) and deacons."

I Timothy 3:1 -- ",It is a trustworthy statement: If any aspires to the office of overseer (ἐπισκοπιῆς), it is a fine work he desires to do."