

Course Outline

Class 1: *Unity: A Display of God's Glory in the Local Church*

Class 2: *Membership: Unity through Depth of Commitment*

Class 3: *Diversity: Unity through Breadth of Commitment*

Class 4: *Preaching & Prayer: The Foundation for Unity*

Class 5: *Church Governance: Godly Authority Fostering Unity*

Class 6: *Church Fellowship: Building a Bond of Unity*

Class 7: *Discontentment within the Church: A Test of Unity*

Class 8: *Church Leadership: Submission for the Sake of Unity*

Class 9: *Church Discipline: Preserving God-Glorifying Unity*

Class 10: *Encouragement: Safeguarding Unity in Holiness*

Class 11: *Giving and Service: Sacrifice for the Sake of Unity*

Class 12: *Corporate Worship: Celebrating God-Given Unity*

Class 13: *Evangelism: A Harvest of Unity*

Questions? Email

Core Seminars—Living as a Church

Class 5: Church Governance: Godly Authority Fostering Unity



I. Introduction

- Purpose of class:
 1. To consider the authority structures of the church as set forth in scripture, and how they foster unity within the church.
 2. To consider how we, as members of CHBC, can foster unity by encouraging church leaders and exercising our membership responsibilities.

II. Scriptural Offices of the Church

A. Elders

Four ways that elder leadership promotes unity:

- Places authority in those qualified to exercise it. Hebrews 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 1 Timothy 3
- Makes elders responsible for spiritual health of members and accountable to God.

Hebrews 13:17: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.”

- Requires members to obey and humbly submit to authority.

Hebrews 13:17: “Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

- Establishes a plurality of elders.
Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14

Three points of application:

- Obey your elders and submit to their leadership
- Make the elders’ work a joy rather than a burden
- Consider the qualifications of prospective elders

B. Deacons

Three ways deacons unify the church:

- They care for all members of the church. Acts 6.
- They free elders for ministry of the Word and prayer.

Acts 6:2-4: So the twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

- They distribute work throughout the congregation.

Two points of application:

- Select deacons who foster unity
- Support deacons by volunteering in their ministries

III. Congregationalism

A. Congregational Authority – three areas.

- Discipline – Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Cor. 5
- Membership – 2 Cor. 2:6-8
- Doctrine – Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Tim. 4:3-4
- This authority furthers unity by enabling the congregation to protect the Gospel message.

B. Balancing Elder Leadership and Congregationalism.

Question #1 – Over what other areas of decision-making does the congregation have final say?

- Scripture does not clearly identify other areas. This is left to the judgment and discretion of the individual congregation.

Question #2 – How do we obey our leaders and, at the same time, exercise our congregational responsibility.

- The congregation must assert its authority where a matter is serious and the elders’ position is clearly contrary to scripture.
- Where the issue is serious but unclear, the congregation should trust the elders.

Two points of application:

- Guard against false teaching in the church
- Take seriously your membership responsibilities