

# **Foundation-1: An Orientation**

## ***Session 5***

### **OUR GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE**

We believe each person has an identity in Christ. God has designed us each uniquely and has a specific destiny for each of us. It is our responsibility to discover and live out both our personal identify and His destiny for us. Not only is that true for each of us, but it is also true for each and every church. We believe God has had, does now, and will continue to have His hand on the URF. As a church, we are to also understand and live our identity as we fulfill our destiny in Him. It is our hope and prayer that these “Foundation Groups” will help with that process. This group, called “An Orientation”, is the first of four series of small group that looks closely at our foundation. In this one, we have been examining Our Salvation, Our Statements, and Our Strategy. We are now ready to consider Our Structure.

### **OUR STRUCTURE:**

Structure is defined as the arrangement or interrelation of all the parts of a whole. It is our desire that you will understand not only all the “parts” that make the URF, but that you will understand the arrangement and the interrelation of them and begin to participate in that structure with the goal of growing in Christ – becoming more like Him.

As we consider Our Structure, we will look at three areas:

**Our Governmental Structure**

**Our Ministry Structure**

**Our Affiliation Structure**

### **OUR GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE:**

In this session as we explore how the URF is organized governmentally and other aspects of our structure, please understand that our goal is not that you just follow the structure, but that you understand it so that you can better follow Jesus and therefore, become a better disciple. We are attempting to build His Kingdom, not our kingdom. Our desire is that you become a follower of Jesus, and not just of the URF. It is also our desire that you are transformed by being in His presence, rather than because you have been just present at the URF gatherings.

Let’s see what the Bible says on how a church should be structured and organized.

Structure often times gets a bad rap. We may view structure as a rigidity that stifles individuality and creativity. Though that may exist, that is not our model and we are not

talking about that type of negative structure. Structure is in fact very important. Without it, there is no health, growth, and movement for the organism or organization for that matter. Structure is like the skeleton. If we had no structure, no skeleton, we would be a blob on the floor, ugly at that, not healthy, unable to grow or even move. We'd be totally ineffective. In the same way that the structure, or skeleton, is necessary for the human body, structure is necessary for the Body of Christ, the Church.

The Bible says that church is the body of the Christ. We know that every body has a skeleton or structure. Therefore, every church has a structure behind it. Some structures may actually prevent growth while some of them cause growth. Some of them are good, some of them are bad. The Bible puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 14, "*For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.*" God is a God of order. You don't have to look far into His creation to see examples of that. He is extremely orderly. He is the author of order. Structure is about order, about doing things in fitting and orderly ways. Why, just for control? No, but for growth and His will to be done.

We believe that the structure of the church should not be determined by culture, business practices, or even traditions. We believe that the nature of the church determines its structure. In other words, what the church is should determine how we organize. Voting, committees, boards, parliamentary procedure, majority rule, elections, board members -- what do these words have in common? Politics? Trouble? Bureaucracy?

None of them are in the Bible. Not one of them. Yet many churches are organized around committees and boards, board members, voting and elections – things of the business world. None of that's in the Bible. What is often done in the church is to take our culture, an American form of government which does have voting, elections, committees, majority rule, and we've imposed them on or incorporate them into the church. Our model is not of this world and its structure, but of His Kingdom and His structure.

So, how should a church be organized? Let's look at what the Bible says and study these closer...

1. The church is a **fellowship**.
2. The church is a **family**.
3. The church is a **body**.
4. The church is a **flock**.

### **1. The Bible says the church is a fellowship.**

Acts 2:42 "*They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles and joined in **the fellowship**.*" Fellowship is not just something the church is. It's something we **do**.

Our very name – The Upper Room Fellowship – implies that fellowship is at the core of

our structure.

What is fellowship? The best definition is "Two fellows on the same ship." If you were in New York City and you were going to take a boat to London, you would inevitably have fellowship with some people. You're headed in the same direction, so you get to know each other and you associate because you're going in the same direction. That's what fellowship is. Fellowship is when you get to know other people because you're headed in the same direction. Fellowship is about companionship, a mutual sharing of experiences, activities, and interests.

As Christians, we're all headed to heaven. We're headed in the same direction. So the Bible says we're to have fellowship with each other. Because the Bible says the church is a fellowship, a top priority in fellowship is harmony and unity. You can have unity without having uniformity. Have you noticed we're all different? We have different colored hair, different colored skin. We're different ages. We're different sizes. God loves that. God loves diversity. Thank God we're not all alike. It would really be boring if there was only vanilla in the world. Most of us like lots of different flavors. And so does God, that's why there are different flavors. That's why there's Buskin Robbins. God made you to be a flavor and He wants you to be you. He doesn't want you to be anybody else. And no one flavor is better than any other flavor. When we talk about unity, we have unity because we're all saved by Jesus Christ, not because we all look alike, act alike, breathe alike, talk alike or even dress alike.

The Bible says *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."* The next verse says, *"Let us concentrate on the things that make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together."* The Bible teaches that anything that causes disunity is sin. There are a bunch of verses that says anybody that causes conflict in the church is sinning. When you cause conflict in a church, when you get Christians mad at other Christians, what you're doing is destroying the fellowship. And if you destroy the fellowship, you don't have a church.

The implication of this is that, however a church is organized, a good structure should promote unity and downplay differences. We should organize in a way that minimizes our differences and maximizes what we have in common.

The problem is that many churches are organized in such a way that its structure promotes differences rather than downplays them. For instance, if a church votes on all kinds of different issues, every time they take a vote, are they not causing people to take sides? So every time they take a vote, they're actually creating division in the church.

Paul talks about this in the Corinthian church. He says "Often your meetings do more harm than good." How sad when a church meeting does more harm than good. Paul goes on to say, *"Because I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you."*

The Bible says that anytime you divide the church, you're creating a division and that harms the fellowship. For that reason we don't vote on things here at this church. Voting tends to create division. For instance, if I were to say to you, "How many of you like the color of our carpet?" There are going to be some of you who like it and some of you who do not like it. Then there are ones who have not noticed the color of the carpet and could care less. What if we had voted for the color of the carpet? Every time you take a vote, somebody loses. Nobody can win all the time. Not pastors, not elders, not deacons. So if you vote on everything, pretty soon you've got a church full of losers! The harmony has gone down and the love has gone down because the division has gone up because you're voting on everything.

Voting is foreign in the New Testament; there's not one example of voting in the New Testament. You would think if they voted on anything it would have been choosing Judas' replacement. They had to pick an apostle to replace him because he went out and committed suicide. How did they choose? It says they cast lots. That means they rolled dice of sorts. Voting was so foreign to their thinking they were more likely to draw straws than they were to vote. There is not one example of majority rule in the New Testament except when Paul was taken prisoner on the ship to Rome and he told them, "God's told me, even though I'm the prisoner, not to set sail. If you do, we're going to run into a storm." But the majority of the sailors thought it would be good anyway so they left. And the ship wrecked.

The majority may win, but what if the majority is wrong? In the Old Testament the majority of the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt and Moses said, "No, we've got to keep going. We've got to go to the Promised Land."

A church is not a democracy. A church is a theocracy. God is in charge and our whole job is to find out what God wants us to do and then do it. Our governmental structure for this fellowship is a plurality of leadership. Elders are set in as pastors to oversee the direction and care of the members. We'll look at this in more detail later.

But at this point, let's just say that the church is a fellowship and our desire is to maintain the unity and fulfill the destiny that God intends. To that end the elders will continue to strive.

## **2. The church is a family.**

Because the church is a family, that should affect how we're organized too. Is your family organized differently than the business you work at? Sure it is. 1 Peter 3:8 *"You should be like one big happy family full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds."* We are to be one big happy family.

So because we're a family, we operate on the basis of relationships, not rules. Do people ever make mistakes? Sure they do. When that happens in the church, grace and forgiveness is sought. As a result, we act like a family. And in a family you don't have a rule book for your family. You don't have a policy manual for your family. You

operate on the basis of relationships.

How do we relate? Like a family. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 (Phillips) *"Don't reprimand a senior member of the church. Appeal to him as a father. Treat the young men as brothers and the older women as mothers. Treat the younger women as sisters."* If churches would just follow that verse, they'd have so few problems. The Bible says we're to treat each other like a family. We're to treat those who have been Christians longer than us as spiritual fathers and mothers. And treat those who are about the same age as us as spiritual brothers and sisters. We are a family. We have spiritual fathers in this church. Nobody elected them. They're not a board. They're not some heavy duty council.

Our elders (pastors) are not elected or selected by majority vote. So then, how are they chosen or selected? Simply put, we identify, by natural observation and spiritual confirmation, an individual who has exhibit a calling and gifting in their life for leading the church. After this identification, they are called along beside the elders to be mentored and to further confirm future actions of laying or not laying hands on them and setting in or ordaining them as an elder to provide spiritual oversight for the church.

Deacons, those that provide oversight of the natural affairs of the church, are selected in a similar way. There is an identification or acknowledgment of a calling, a time of testing and mentoring and then a time of laying on of hands for ordination.

The point is, these important decisions are not decided by voting. Do you vote in your family for major or minor issues? If we voted in our families, some would have ice cream for breakfast, some may play Nintendo all day, some may never go to school, some would never do any homework, and some would take vacations every other week. In a family, the mature are often the minority with the majority made up of children.

Following the same logic, that's why it's not wise to give everybody an equal vote in the church. To give an equal vote to somebody that's been a Christian fifty years and another guy who's been a Christian twenty years and another guy who's been a Christian one year and another guy who's been a Christian one day and say you all have an equal vote is silly. The Bible says we're to value those who have been Christians longer than us and who are spiritually mature.

How do you know who the spiritually mature are in a church? Simple. Look at their character. Look at their walk with the Lord.

Notice the character that's required of a pastor. *"A pastor must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his family how can he take care of God's church?"* It's interesting that it says the pastor is to manage the church like a father and husband is to manage the family. An un-managed family is an unloved family. And an un-managed church is an unloved church. It says a pastor must manage the church like fathers manage the home.

One of the qualifications for being a pastor is that he is to have a strong family life. Why is that? Not once in Scripture does it say that the pastor has to have a degree in business. Not once does it say that a pastor has to know Greek and Hebrew. Not once does it say you have to be a success in business to be a pastor.

But it does say you have to have a strong family life. And you must have the skills to manage a family well because the church is a family, not a business. The same skills that a pastor uses with his family as husband and father, is to be use as he pastors the church.

How do you manage a family? Is it done as a dictator? Blow a whistle and everybody comes running in my home? Command them and tell them to do this?

The Bible says that the husband is to be the spiritual leader of his home by laying down his life for his wife and children. It says, just as Christ laid down His life for the church, the husband to give his life for his wife and children. He is to put their needs ahead of his own, that he may lead by serving them and by setting an example. That's what it means to be a leader. He is to serve them and set an example. That's how a man is to lead their family.

In a similar way that is how this church is led; by serving people, putting their needs first, sacrificing and setting an example from the pastoral team – the elders.

We hope you better understand our structure at the URF. Our church is a fellowship and a family and these determine our structure, but let's go on.

### **3. The church is a body.**

There are many verses in Scripture that says the church is the body of Christ. We're a body, not a business. We are an organism, not an organization. Therefore at the URF we function on the basis of spiritual gifts (your abilities and talents), not elected offices. In other words, whatever you're good at, what God has called you to do, what you were designed for, is what you ought to do. Nobody's going to elect you to a position. If you're good at playing an instrument or singing, perhaps you should be on a worship team or help lead worship in a small group. If you're good with and have a heart for children, perhaps you ought to be in the children's ministry. If you're good at organizing... you get the idea. We don't elect anybody into a ministry anymore than we elect parts of our own body.

Did you elect your hand? No. Your hand is a hand because it can do hand things. It can lift up and it can put down. Your throat gets to be a throat because it can swallow. Did you elect your eye? Your eye gets to be the eye in the body of the Christ because it's gifted at seeing.

The point is whatever you're gifted at and what God is calling you to, that's more than likely your part in the body of Christ.

*"Just as each of us have one body with many members and these members do not all have the same functions, so in Christ we who are many form one body and **each member belongs to all the others**. As part of this church, you belong to everybody else. If you don't want to belong to everybody else, don't join our church because this is what it means to be a member. It's a commitment to other people. We each have different gifts according to the grace given to us. Whatever you're good at, that's what you ought to do in the body of Christ. We'll be looking at this later in other Foundation Group material.*

In an organization, maintenance becomes the focus but in an organism, ministry becomes the focus. What do we mean by that?

In an organization, maintenance of the organization is important. It tends to be program-driven. The organization has an agenda; it has programs and committees to accomplish that agenda. It needs people to run these programs so the organization can accomplish its agenda. A church should not be an organization. It is to be an organism. An organism is organic, changing and growing as its members relate and function in their identity. The church as an organism should be driven by people in ministries. People are not placed into a committee to fill a position, but rather are released into their purpose to fulfill their destiny thereby causing the organism to be healthy and productive.

It's not about a slick running church operation. It's not about doing church; it's about being the church. Unfortunately, many churches spend much of their time and energy internally taking care of "their stuff" while the whole world is dying around them.

So our goal is to simplify church to maximize ministry. We do not have an organizational chart for the URF. Our entire organization can be summed up in two sentences built on Ephesians 4:11-12. *"It was (God) who gave some to be apostles...prophets...evangelists...pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service (ministry), so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

As you look at that verse, who is to do the ministry of the church? The pastors and teachers or the people? The people are to do the ministry. According to that, what are pastors and teachers supposed to do? Prepare God's people for ministry.

It's not the pastors' job to be a minister. It's the pastors' job to equip you for your ministry. Pastors are ministers because they are a Christian and every Christian is a minister. The Bible teaches this very clearly. One day you're going to stand before God and He's going to ask you two questions. First He's going to say, "What did you do with my Son, Jesus Christ?" And I hope you already know the answer to that one. "I've given my life to Him. I've made Him my Lord and Master. I've committed my life to Christ. I've accepted Him for salvation."

Then He's going to say, number two, "What did you do with what I gave you?" You have some talents. You have some abilities. You have some spiritual gifts. You have some natural inclinations, some interests. Where do you think you got those interests? God put them in your life. He didn't give you that talent and ability just to use on yourself. He meant for you to use them to help other people to make the world a better place.

When you use your talents, abilities, interests to help other people, that's called ministry. Our job as pastors and teachers is to help equip you for your ministry – to help you fulfill your destiny.

Remember, the people are the ministers and the pastors are the administrators. It's not the pastors' job to do all the ministry. It's their job to train, equip and support you for your ministry. It is our goal to lead in such a way that those overseeing a ministry have ownership and are empowered to lead. We do not believe in micro-managing.

Studies of successful business have revealed a common principle. They have what is called "loose-tight properties" -- which means there is a strong, central control that keeps the business committed to its vision but all the day to day decisions are made by the actual people doing the work. Loose-tight properties.

That's the way God designed the church to operate 2000 years ago. That's the way the URF operates. In our church the pastors are responsible to keep the church committed to the Biblical vision, what the church should be doing based on our mission, our vision, our beliefs, and our values. The elders keep the church on track, doctrinally straight and in the direction of fulfilling our identity and destiny. All along, the ministry is not done by just the pastors, but by all the people.

Our church is structured not for control, but for transformation. It's the radically transformed heart from knowing God that brings about a life that effectively shares life and serves others. It's structured so that this intimacy with the Father is nurtured. It is only in this intimate relationship with God that individuals can truly know God, who they are and what God had called them to do. It is from this that ministries and functions in the church are birthed and fulfilled.

#### **4. The church is a flock.**

Jesus' favorite description of the church was that of a flock. Therefore the church is cared for and led by shepherds. Shepherds lead and feed.

John 21. *"Jesus asked Simon Peter, 'Do you really love me?' 'Yes, Lord,' said Peter. 'Then take care of My sheep.'" The shepherd is the pastor that takes care of the sheep, We have several pastors or elders that function in this capacity. But before we further define the pastor, let's get something straight.*

Fifty-eight times in the Bible it uses the phrase "one another". It says, "Love one another, Care for one another ... Greet one another ... Encourage one another ... Pray for one another ... Counsel one another ... Share with one another ... Help one another ..." It is the mutual ministry of the body to itself.

God never meant for one man -- a super star pastor -- to meet everybody's needs. But He meant for all of us to be ministers to minister to each other. We have all seen what happens when a church is built on a single personality. And that person dies or they have a moral failure and they fall out. What happens? The ministry collapses. As you read in the history of the UR, this church was not built on or around a single person. So from the very beginning of the church, it's been our goal to continue in this structure by releasing others into ministry.

We desire to spread the ministry around. In many churches there is this one man superstar. He tries to minister to everybody. For a short period of time, it may seem good, but in the end it's not good for him, his family and it's not good for a church.

The fact is, if any of the URF's pastors were to drop dead right now, the URF would keep growing because it's not built on one person, but on a team. It is a healthy church. It's healthy because it's not built on one individual.

As stated above, the church is a flock and it is cared for and led by shepherds. There are three different terms that are used in the New Testament to refer to the same church leader.

1. "Poimen" in Greek means pastor or shepherd. That means the feeders are the leaders -- the feeding aspect of ministry. Where Jesus says to Peter, "*Take care of My sheep*" that's the word *poimen*, it's the word pastor. Pastor means to take care of a flock.

2. "Presbuteros" means "elder" in Greek. "Presbyterian" comes from this. Presbyterians call their leaders elders. It's a good, legitimate term. It's a Biblical term. It refers to spiritual maturity. An elder doesn't mean physically old. It means spiritual maturity. Timothy was the elder and chief pastor of the church at Ephesus. Paul says, "You are the elder and you're the pastor at Ephesus. You are to appoint other elders." Yet later in the same book it says, "Don't let anybody look down on you because you're a young kid." How could he be an elder and yet a young kid at the same time? Because he'd been a Christian since he was a child and although he might have been 30 years old or 25, he'd been a Christian for 20-25 years, whereas these guys who were older than him had only been a Christian for a year. It's referring to spiritual maturity, not physical maturity.

3. "Episcopos" is the word for "overseer" or "bishop". "Episcopalian" comes from this. They call their leaders bishops. There's nothing wrong with that; that's a good Biblical word. "Epi" in Greek means "over". "Scopos" means "to see" (telescope, microscope, stethoscope). Episcopos means "to oversee". Today, we call them a

manager. Bishop means manager, supervisor, overseer, a manager. It's just an old English word for manager. It refers to the managing aspects of church leadership.

What's the difference between a pastor and an elder? An elder and a bishop? A bishop and a shepherd? A shepherd and an overseer? Nothing.

The words are used interchangeably in the New Testament. Americans are far more hung up on titles than they were in the New Testament. We see examples of this exchange of terms all through the New Testament.

1 Peter 5:1-2 *"To the elders [presbuteros] I say, be shepherds [poimen] of God's flock,"* So he says an elder is a shepherd is a pastor. Then he says, *"...serving as overseers [episcopos]"*. A bishop is an elder is a pastor.

Acts 20 *"Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders [presbuteros] of the church. When they arrived he said to them, 'Guard yourselves and all the flock of God which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishop]. Be pastors [shepherds] of the church of God.'" They are used interchangeably.*

How many pastors does our church have? Remember I'm not talking about ministers. Every Christian is a minister. In our church, we have a body of ordained elders who lead the church and they form what we call the Leadership Team. How many elders do we have in this church? It is the same as the number of pastors, because an elder is a pastor. How many bishops? Overseers? All the same answer, because they are the same people.

In our church, we presently have one of the pastors, Chuck Hamilton, paid full time to serve and is known as the lead pastor. He, along with the other pastors – Bruce Stryffeler, Phil Steiner, Ron Myers, and Greg Aker – serve on the elder leadership team.

So what do you call the pastoral staff? Please don't call us "Reverend". Actually you can just call us by our names. We are not into titles. If you want to call the elders, pastor, that's fine.

All that has been discussed defines our governmental structure of our church. It's very different from the way many churches are organized. Because it is different and because it is important to understand, before we go on to other aspects of our structure, let's clarify all that has been said.

In simple terms, we view the church as a...

**Fellowship** were unity is protected yet diversity is encouraged and nurtured  
**Family** in all aspects with leaders functioning similar to Godly leadership of a home  
**Body** with each member doing its part for the good of the Body  
**Flock** being led by a team of shepherds that equip the sheep

## **OUR GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE:**

**We believe and function in...**

**Plurality of Leadership** – We do not have a single pastor that leads or shepherds the flock, but rather an eldership team of pastors that share that responsibility. One has been designated as the lead pastor.

**The Five Fold Ministry** – Within this leadership team, God has equipped the men differently *giving some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers* (Eph 4:11)

**The Equipping of the Saints** – God has given this eldership team the responsibility to prepare His people for works of service, *so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* (Eph 4:12)

## **FOUNDATIONS-1/5: LIFE APPLICATION:**

1. **What 3 aspects of structure are we going to consider?**
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
2. **How is structure good? How could it be negative?**
3. **How is the Church a Fellowship?**
4. **How is the Church a Family?**
5. **How is the Church a Body?**
6. **How is the Church a Flock?**

**7. How would you define our Governmental Structure in your own words?**

**1. Plurality of Leadership**

**2. The Five Fold Ministry**

**3. The Equipping of the Saints**

**8. What does all this information mean to you? What is God saying to you in your time of study and with your group?**