

Decently & In Order

(Under a new chair in the men's business meeting, the rule of order was done away and the question came up on combining the men and women for the purpose of decision making that all in the congregation, including the men, were to abide by. This lesson was to resolve those issues. It did for most...)

To preface the following we need to take another look at what the word “love” means with reference to how we’ve been looking at, feeling about and treating each other, whether openly, in secret or from within. Obviously there are different contexts in which the word love is used in the New Testament, but the overall sense of the word has to do with wanting what’s best for everyone else, including those we might consider our enemies (*Mat 5:44*). And what would we consider the ultimate best for others, but for them to live eternally in Heaven. The ultimate hate, on the other hand, would be to wish for someone to go to Hell. So, can I say from my heart in truth that there’s not one person in this assembly (*or even of those who are absent*) that I don’t love? Of course to love, according to Christ’s implementation of the word, is to “love one another: just as [He has] loved [us], [we] also are to love one another” (*Jn 13:34*). How far is that love to go? As far as where “we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers” (*1 Jn 3:16*). But have we matured in the faith to that point, where we would lay down our lives for someone, according to the commandment, that we may not even like because of some differences we may have with them? This lesson will put your answer to the test, as it has mine.

But before going forward we need to understand where there must either be a command, an example or a necessary inference by giving book, chapter and verse if anyone on either side of any topic wishes to make an issue where none may even exist.

1Co 14:40 But **all** things should be done **decently** (*Gk.2156: -honestly*) and in **order** (*Gk.5010-regular arrangement: -official dignity*). (*Emp. added*)

The Subject of Combining Meetings

Most meetings, including congregational, fail their objectives when chaos replaces a rule of order or a ‘regular arrangement’. The men have decided to rotate the chair in the MBM but how are the men to chair a meeting if there are no preset guidelines in place to do such? And where do we find scriptural authority for even having a chair? Would **not** having a man leading such meetings be considered “decently and in order”? Our men’s business meetings (*MBM*) have never fit the ‘norm’ of many in the brotherhood (*until recently*), so I was perplexed with the idea of changing them until I was given the opportunity to at least pour over some suggested readings on this topic.

Citing the behavior in MBM of other congregations as proof of their not being ‘scriptural’ means nothing and should hold no sway. Doesn’t that constitute an ‘opinion’? Book, chapter and verse, please! I equate such meetings to guns; left alone, guns don’t kill. It’s the attitude behind those using them, using the gun (*MBM*) as a tool to accomplish (*in some cases*) an evil agenda, when implemented for such. When guns are used for hunting or self-defense they are being used to accomplish what is good. Left alone, without such an agenda, men’s business meetings also accomplish what is good. Sadly, it only takes one or more incidents where guns are used to commit evil deeds for the gun control crowd to come out of the woodwork. The same goes with these meetings. Isn’t it sad, when brethren can’t “live in peace; [so that] the God of love and peace will be with [us]” (*2 Cor 13:11*)?

But, some things **are** difficult to change because change, in and of itself, means stepping out into the unknown (*away from comfort zones*) even if the status quo isn’t working. Not being one that has any desire to change, I fear any change (*without having time to study why such a change is so necessary*) might become the beginning of a down-ward spiral away from doctrinal truth,

which from experience, I've seen take place in some congregations. And, regrettably, such fear of change is what keeps many from leaving their respective denominations in order to be "transferred... to the kingdom of His dear Son" (*Col 1:13*). Fear of change then, is good when it fits the situation but it has to be approached with respect for those who fear it.

Rom 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Eph 5:21 ...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So are we nurturing each other's faith or are we hindering it? And we need to be very careful of those things that may be considered "gossip" (*Rom 1:29*) because such can produce "factions" (*1 Cor 11:19*) and many a congregation has been split because of "cliques" which discourage those who are left to feel they don't 'belong'. Such only brings to mind...

1Th 5:22 Abstain from **every** form (*Gk.1491- view*) of evil. (*Emp. added*)

I have dissected the passages in favor of changing the way the men of the congregation run the everyday business of the church. Trust me when I say this, all this research has been done so that I could come to a conclusion as to where I stand on this issue, now that scriptural references have been cited as a means of changing a long practiced (*although not perfect since we are human*) way of conducting the business of the church.

This issue is so important that it should be seen as being one that could decide the eternal fate of all who have an "opinion" on the subject of gender differences, that **differ** from inspiration, whose lines are **not** to be crossed, and that are plainly stated in the Bible. It can also be one reason congregations aren't growing, not doing Bible things in Bible ways. And since many obviously aren't growing numerically, the only conclusion we can truly arrive at is that God isn't giving them the increase (*1 Cor 3:6*). Are we afraid of growth? Are we satisfied with keeping the status quo? So why can't we just allow the scripture to do the leading without bias?

Who is being addressed in Acts 15? **What** is the subject?

To whom does this subject concern? Men or woman or perhaps both?

Act 15:1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the **brothers** (*Gk.80*), "Unless **you** are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, **you** cannot be saved." (*Emp. added*)

- Rhetorical question: **Who** was to be circumcised according to this false teaching? The whole church or just the men?

Who sent them?

Act 15:3 So, being sent on their (*Paul, Barnabas and others*) way **by the church** (*Gk.1577- congregation*), they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the brothers. (*Emp. added*)

Who welcomed them in Jerusalem?

Act 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by **the church** (*Gk.1577*) and the **apostles** (*Gk.652- commissioners of Christ*) and the **elders**, and they declared all that God had done with them. (*Emp. added*)

Who came together to consider the subject of circumcision?

Another rhetorical question: Were there female apostles and elders?

Act 15:6 The **apostles** and the **elders** were gathered together **to consider this matter**. (*Emp. added*)

Who were in attendance to hear this matter?

Act 15:7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them (*the men who were present to hear his response that pertained to them, inferring that there was a separate meeting from the whole church*), "**Brothers**, (*KJV- "Men [Gk.435- a man]and brethren [Gk.80- a brother]"*) you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe.

Another passage with the same Greek word (*80*) but in a different context, using a different gloss.

Act 6:3 Therefore, brothers (*Gk.80- Thayer: a fellow believer*), pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom **we** will appoint to this duty. (*"brothers" refers to "the whole gathering"- v. 5*) (*Emp. added*)

- Context demands proper interpretation. Both passages use the **same** Greek word. We will deal with Acts 6 shortly.

What is the scripturally authoritative order in the decision making process?
And how does that resonate with the following passage?

Act 15:22 Then it seemed good to the (a) **apostles** and the (b) **elders, with** the (c) **whole church** (*which included the women*), to **choose men** from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. (*Emp. added*)

The apostles and elders (*both consisting of the men of the church*) came together (*15:6*) to decide **before** the whole church was involved in making the decision "to choose men from among them". Why would the women of the congregation be so concerned about their men being circumcised? At least one answer: Whatever affected the men on this matter would have affected the women who had husbands that they would have been intimately involved with, and or sons they obviously didn't want to have put through the act of circumcision. But that's only an assumption since the men (*apostles and elders*) were the most interested in this subject and were **first** to make the decision to send **anyone**. Only **after** the apostles and elders came together (*a meeting that did not include the "whole church"*) was the church involved. They, apostles and elders, then chose to send "Judas called Barsabas, and Silas" (*v. 22b*) with Paul...

Act 15:23 with the following letter: "The **brothers**, both the **apostles** and the **elders, to the brothers** who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since **we** have heard that some persons have gone out from **us** and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although **we** gave them no instructions, 25 it has seemed good to **us**, having come to one accord, **to choose men** and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, (*Emp. added*)

The "we" and "us" are referring to the "brothers", the "apostles and the elders" who "heard" of the Gentile situation, being taught that obedience to the Mosaic custom of circumcision, was necessary to their salvation. The same "us" were **credited** with the act "to choose men", so by such a statement, **they** made the choice **before** having the whole church involved. **They** made the decision, presenting their findings to the church for their **recognition** as those chosen were "leading men among the brothers (*v. 22*)" and **not** for their approval. Do **inspired men** heed the approval of the church **over** God?

Act 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered (*the high priest*), "We must obey God rather than men."

Obviously, there are no **inspired** men today so **how** do we make such decisions without them (*or without elders for that matter*)?

Acts 6

Act 6:2 And **the twelve** (*anytime this conjunction is used it refers to the apostles of Christ*) summoned the **full number** of the disciples (*the whole church*) and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers (*Gk.80-Thayer: a fellow-believer, ...of Christians, constituting as it were but a single family*), pick out from among **you** seven **men** of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom **we** will appoint to this duty. (*Emp. added*)

Shows that **even though** the **whole** group was brought together to make a decision from among them, who it would be that the apostles (*having the gift of discernment*) would choose to take care of the Grecian widows, the decision was ultimately settled by the apostles to send anyone and **not** the whole church. The men and women chose those they felt best able from among their fellowship (*knowing them personally*) but the apostles, who were men, made the **final** decision. **Do we not see a pattern here?** "The whole gathering" did the choosing (*v. 5*) before presenting their choices "before the apostles" (*v. 6*). And contrary to the belief that if a woman was more talented than a man (*in this case women would have been more talented at taking care of these widows*) why **didn't** the twelve then ask that they "*pick out from among you seven members of good repute*"? Thus showing, as an **example**, that there **definitely was** a division between the men (*apostles and elders*) and women in making the **final** decision on this occasion. Therefore, as the example shows, division between men and women for the purpose of making **final** decisions **is** scriptural. But when, and in what setting, are these **final** decisions to be made? Then the question is asked, how does a church (*including the women*) without elders, make decisions since we understand the church is not a democracy? Answer: Look to the "*natural order that exists in the very nature of the Divine scheme of things.*" (*Wayne Jackson*) Who makes the final decisions, even if the women might be present in the decision making process? According to 1 Tim 2:12, can women take part in that process even though all, including the men, would be subject to obey such decisions? How can we say "majority rules" since that would constitute a democracy? What if the "majority" is wrong? Isn't the church a theocracy? Is reaching a consensus the same as voting? How do we make decisions on who pays the bills or even who preaches, and how is that not done were it not for taking a vote unless one man has more clout than the rest and he makes all the decisions for everyone, either outright or presumed? Isn't that a "denominational" understanding? Why have bylaws? Who makes any non-Biblical decision that would affect the congregation without the expediency of having someone in charge of, say, the bank account? Who determines what comes from the pulpit? And most importantly, who decides when there is a disagreement on a particular passage that may end up going against the Divine will or, at the very least, cause a division? We should never think we have the authority to change inspiration!

1Pe 5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. (*The two words occurring so close together may well indicate Peter is simply referring to age in both cases and is telling young men to yield to the wisdom of older men.- Gary Hampton*) Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.

In the age of women's 'liberation' (*it actually made those promoting it slaves to a satanic world view because it undermines the creation order that was set in the very beginning-Gen 2:18; 3:16*) the world outside the church (*speaking here concerning gender roles*) should never influence the mindset of those who are in positions to make decisions that might alter the Divine order. Such a movement has, in many ways, affected gender related authority where it pertains to spiritual leadership. Denominations have been accepting women into their "priesthoods" where such usurps the authority of their men, not to mention the inspired word. We understand the priesthood under our "High Priest" (*Christ Jesus- Heb 3:1; 4:4, 15*) automatically consists of both men and women according to 1 Pet 2:9 and Rev 1:6. But such a priesthood also has in place gender roles. True, the epistles were sent to the churches (*including the women*), but the content of the letters differentiated the genders according to authoritative roles; Christ, over men, over women.

1Co 11:3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (ESV)

Interlinear: "*head of the woman is the man*". Which is the proper rendering according to the original text.

1Ti 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet (*Gk.2271- stillness*).

A congregation in another part of PA had a split about 35 years ago over this very issue. At that time there were some younger women who were adamant about "women's rights" and not about "women's roles". They wanted to be more involved in the decision making process where the Bible is clear on both areas; gender specific rights and roles. If there was anything that would be done that would usurp the scriptural authority of the men, by the women in the church, it would be in the **final** decision making under which **all** are to be subordinate. In other words, sorry ladies but speaking the truth, when final decisions are made where all are to obey, no sister can take part in it since it would constitute her having authority over the brothers. It's as simple as that.

Gal 3:28

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

How far do we take Gal 3:28 when it comes to gender roles in the body of Christ?

"Some would do away with the rule entirely as obsolete on the ground that in Christ there is neither male nor female; but this is undoubtedly unwarranted, for while the Gospel emancipated woman, it did not change her natural relation so as to make her the equal of man."

McGarvey

Our equality in this passage only goes as far as we are all souls equally in need of Christ's blood to save us, thus making us no different in that respect as we stand before God. It **does not**, however, disregard other passages that teach gender related roles.

"We put on the personality of Christ in the sight of God, and so become, in an individual sense, sons of God, but the individual sense is almost wholly lost in the collective, so that all those racial distinctions and all the fictitious distinctions of caste [social order], and even the distinction of gender, which made a man look upon a woman with contempt, are lost sight of."

McGarvey

All this passage is saying, is that women are to be treated with respect, as she should be, as a child of God once she exited the waters of baptism.

Unity

As Wayne Jackson noted under the subject of “Hindrances to Unity”:

“Time and again men have arisen who, more than anything else, had a passion for notoriety, a lust for fame, hence, they either created an issue, or seized upon one, in order to thrust themselves into prominence.”

“Most every church that has been forced to take care of its affairs in the ‘men’s business meeting’ format has encountered headstrong creatures of this temperament, and on occasion, churches have been divided as a result. These attitudes are evil.” (As the result of this issue this group was split.- CY)

Which is why we should all...

2Co 13:5 Examine [ourselves], to see whether [we] are in the faith. Test [ourselves]. Or do [we] not realize this about [ourselves], that Jesus Christ is in [us]?--unless indeed [we] fail to meet the test!

A Christian who is honest with himself (*or herself*) may find they are on the wrong side of an issue because of being “puffed up with conceit and [may] fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim 3:6). I can relate to this because there have been incidents where I was obviously wrong and where my conscience made me apologize for such. **None of us are immune.** (Gal 6:1-“...Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted”) This is why a new convert is never to be appointed to the position of elder (1 Tim 3:6). Power corrupts even the humblest among us. When a self-examination reveals error, the one who admits their mistakes (*and or sinful attitudes*) and, **in truth**, humbly changes, they are the ones who have no “lust for fame”. They make for better ‘leaders’ than the ones who ‘create issues and seize upon them’. The humble have no desire to make themselves everyone’s best friend as a way of gaining such ‘notoriety’.

Having to make this study has forced us into “the defense of the Gospel” (Php 1:16) since passages were cited that needed to be reviewed. And I do appreciate when brethren have ready such passages before making propositions without them! Without which, the subject to change our (MBM) format is without merit. And if we are to exert time and effort on this we want to make sure all i’s are dotted and t’s crossed. If only all this energy expended on such discord was placed on carrying the Gospel into the community, where would we think our growth might have been by now?

The Eldership

One reason for some congregations to be established may well be because of the lack of scripturally qualified men in an eldership, and not wanting to submit to their authority because of it, not because of a ‘passion for notoriety’.

Obviously, it could be years before infant churches have scripturally appointed men (1 Tim 3:1-7/Titus 1:5), but in the meantime they need to get their congregation to the point of “there [being] no divisions among [them]” (1 Cor 1:10)! And not to be unified at the expense of doctrinal truth!

I have seen time and again from experience (*soon to be four decades, not that such experience matters*) where men have arisen who have desired the position of an elder, almost from the moment of conversion. Any new convert who is genuine in his search for the truth, will humbly understand that those privileges belong to the seasoned, respected and Biblically

qualified men among us and not to some, yet ‘wet behind the Biblical ears’ new babe in Christ. And just having an eldership for the sake of having one is no excuse for going against Divine inspiration, as though men know better than God on the matter. It only illustrates an air of laziness with the idea of having those chosen take care of the business of ‘running’ the church so they don’t have to lift a finger or produce one drop of sweat. I’ve even heard **brethren** say such men are ‘qualified’ “*as long as he meets **most** of the qualifications*”, or “*he’ll grow into it*” and “*those qualifications are only qualities that he **should** possess*”. (*All Christians should possess such “qualities” where applicable, but not all are **qualified** [i.e., competent] to be elders.*) Once in, it becomes very difficult to remove an unqualified brother from the eldership. Such ideas create a recipe for disaster. If in baking a cake according to a recipe and one omits certain ingredients, does that make the cake according to the recipe that was given? Then shouldn’t every one of those Biblical qualifications according to the Divine will carry an even higher level of respect? If a man isn’t already an elder before becoming an elder (*i.e., he’s already doing the work*) than he shouldn’t even be considered for it, and that along with only having been in Christ without the years of experience that a more seasoned brother has.

Now I sincerely apologize for any and all wrong that I may have committed in the discussion of this issue since it has been ‘created’. Not that having **civil** MBM will send any of us to Hell, but that once they become uncivil (*as can congregational meetings*), there has to be an alternative. Either we cast out those who get irritated (*which would include the majority mostly because of competing egos*), or respect each other and do things Biblically even if no mention of such a model as ‘business meetings’ can be found in the Bible. From what we’ve seen thus far in this study, doesn’t such a model as MBM make for implementing them as an expedient? True, we don’t have an eldership and it **should** be years before we do since it would take the years of experience to be qualified (*unless in the meantime we have some “replants” of qualified brethren from other congregations*). And MBM are not to be considered a **replacement** for an eldership as some might suggest they are as a reason for not having them.

I’d like to pose a question.

How often in the first century church, and for what reason, was the whole group brought together to make certain decisions when necessary? We know there **are** examples that show such when it comes to our worship (*Act 20:7/1 Cor 16:2*), but is there any command, example or necessary inference that gives **even a hint** to having **regular** gatherings of the **whole** church for the purpose of making decisions? If you can find one, please let me know.

But, we **are** commanded to “be subject to governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” (*Rom 13:1*) And there are passages we are to obey that **do** go against certain manmade laws but having MBM as an expedient to fulfill a **mandated** law, that does **not** go against God, **is not one of them**. On that note, we need to have at least “one scheduled Congregational Meeting per year, as required by PA law, for the approval of a Board of Trustees - a slate that is selected by the MBM. Any member at the Congregational Meeting has the right to bring up concerns or suggestions for consideration at a future MBM. Special Congregational Meetings can be called if the need arises. ...problems arise because we are not scripturally organized (*having men who serve as*) qualified elders... [*but we are to do*] the best we can in our submissiveness to one another and to God.” (*Tom Merritt-State College*)

So, I would suggest we **re-adopt** a “rule of order” (*such was done away with under the present chair*), if such meetings (*congregational and MBM*) are to be successful and where there would be no “filibustering” so that all are able to make their points. In order to accomplish the Divine will, we have been given leverage, **not the right** to change whatever Biblical rule of authority that exists, but to employ an expedient in accomplishing the will of God. Example: Some believe

having a piano to keep the songs we sing in tune, for God to be pleased with our singing, as an expedient. That mindset is not what expediency is all about since there are scriptures that refute such (*Eph 5:19/Col 3:16*). Examples of true expedients would be in having bulletins and song books to guide the worship (*Where do we find those in the Bible?*), and a car and an established place to worship as examples of where and how to get there without going against the Divine will. MBM should never be thought of as a replacement for an eldership! Most, if not all men in such meetings don't even qualify and to think of such meetings in **that** way **would** be to go against the Divine instructions on how God has designed the leadership of His Son's church. Thus the expediency of the chairman. He has no more authority than a "church mouse" in making decisions. He is only employed for the purpose of keeping things running "decently and in order". But we should never go against scripture by not honoring Divinely established Biblically sanctioned gender roles of authority. Especially when we try to alter such based **solely on opinion**.

*"Unity must never be sought at the expense of **compromising truth**".*

*"While every informed and conscientious Christian would never budge from the word of truth for the sake of a **false** unity, the wise person acknowledges that perfect agreement will never be achieved in all matters- nor is it required"*

On this, brother Jackson cited the "difference of opinion that arose between Barnabas and Paul" [Act 15] and "That rift, however, did not destroy their fundamental unity in the Lord". Why? Because that issue was **not** a doctrinal one. And neither is having MBM! Negatives abound on any issue if we only have the desire to look for them. There are negatives about going to worship, driving a car, getting married, and the sky's the limit when looking for such. So to make this an issue, without giving clear passages that are **against** it, when (*even though not perfect*) MBM have served this congregation well, is to "sow discord among brethren", whether on purpose or not.

In closing, I want to apologize to those not involved in this issue personally who've had to sit through this lesson. But I will never apologize for speaking the truth. This is a good congregation made up of good Christians who are seeking to please God even though not all are on the same page as was the case between Barnabas and Paul. They eventually worked out their differences (*Gal 2:1*). Why can't we? Our growth will only come when we honor God and "have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." (*1 Pet 3:8*) And I welcome any response that might refute even a sentence of what's been said. (*A transcript of this lesson can be downloaded from our website.*) The invitation is being made, not to those who wish to refute what was said, (*you can see me later on such in person if you like*) but for the sake of peace, to any whose hearts have been touched and or desire to make things right with God in order to have a relationship with Him throughout eternity.

#1.Have you heard?

#2.Do you believe?

#3.Have you repented of all past sins?

#4.Have you confessed Jesus as the Christ?

#5.Have your sins been washed away by His blood through baptism?

#6.If you've done all these things, have you remained faithful?

#7. Are you growing?

Charli Yana
September 13, 2015

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Repeat:

Wayne Jackson noted under the subject of "Hindrances to Unity":

"Time and again men have arisen who, more than anything else, had a passion for notoriety, a lust for fame, hence, they either created an issue, or seized upon one, in order to thrust themselves into prominence."

(This lesson did not resolve those issues even though it did for most. The congregation where the author was involved was split apart by the few who "created [this] issue". It was later disbanded.)

1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."