

“SHOULD A CHURCH MEMBER HAVE A ‘SAY’ IN ALL OF THE CHURCH’S DECISIONS?”

By Dr. Hoyt W. Allen, Jr.

Sometimes a person is heard saying, “I do not have any voice in my congregation”. This may be true in some cases but is not the norm.

In the human race we have various forms of government. From the tribes in the most remote back country of the past to the most sophisticated masses of today there must be government. Wherever there are people there is a need for them to be governed or they would live “By the law of the jungle”. Thus, among our communities we have various branches of government (village and city councils, county commissioners, state legislatures, federal representatives, mayors, governors, police departments, the military, etc.). From time to time international forces (NATO) are used to police the tyrants in the world (invasion of Kuwait in ‘92 and Kosovo in ‘99).

Often man makes mistakes in government, but God does not. God instituted a plan by which His church was to be governed. A study of the Scriptures will lead one to discover that God has ordained Elders and Evangelists (Pulpit Ministers) to serve as the Leaders in the church.

Church members are given qualifications in the Scriptures to determine who should be selected as their leaders. (Acts 20:28-31; I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-3) When these are selected then they should be respected and supported just as a civil government official should be “backed” by the citizens.

It is not true if I say, “I do not have any ‘say’ in my city government because I do not get to vote on every item of business”. I can call, write, or e-mail my city councilman, state legislature, or federal representative any day of the week and express my opinion on any item of government business.

Likewise in the church, a church member can contact his/her leader at any time and express his/her opinion on various issues of “church business”. Thus, the church leader will take this into consideration when decision time arrives to officially take action concerning the matter at hand.

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Every time a Local School decides to change a policy, they do not contact every taxpayer for approval. When the State Road Commission determines to construct a new road or to widen a present one - they do not contact the general public or we would never have any improvements to our roads. Some people are so used to “running their own lives” and “calling all the shots” that they are uncomfortable being in any situation in which they do not have a vocal ‘say’ on every issue.

Scriptural Church Leaders have the “church at heart” and want the very best for the Lord’s church. They do not want to be dictators, or to hide anything from anybody, even though some misinformed brethren often accuse them of such.

No group known to me (club, brotherhood, fraternity, lodge, association, team, corps, company, etc.) can operate and get anything accomplished by having every member, employee, or supporter to vote on every issue. Likewise the church needs to have confidence in the leaders whom they have appointed to oversee the normal business of the church. Then they should support the leaders. If there are questions in one’s mind, pertaining to a decision of the leaders, the leaders should be asked to comment on such, but this should be carried out in the proper spirit.

A fully organized church will have elders, deacons, trustees, teachers, and a preacher. Nevertheless, God has given specific qualifications for church leaders and these MUST be adhered to. God did not speak on this issue just to be taking up space in the Bible. Many congregations have selected leaders apart from what God’s Word says and then thereafter they have reaped the consequences. That being:

- a) Confusion and division within the church membership
- b) Slow or no growth to the body (stagnation)
- c) Lack of trust and confidence in the leaders
- d) Mediocre examples for future church leaders

If a church does not have an ordained Eldership, then it can function with a “Steering Committee” comprised of men of the congregation. This is not to say that women are not important in the church. There are plenty of ministries in which they can serve. However, God did select men as apostles, evangelists, and elders in the early church. I Cor. 11:3ff gives God’s design for the domestic government, with God first, Christ second, Man third, and the Woman next. I Cor. 14:34ff states that women are to be silent in the church. I Timothy 2:9-15 states that women are not to teach men or demonstrate authority over man.

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