

## Scriptural Church Administration

**Lesson Scope:** 2 Corinthians 12:14 through 2 Corinthians 13:14

### Lesson Focus

In chapter 12, we have noticed that Paul defended his apostleship and God-given authority. He was concerned about the well-being of each believer and also about the purity of the church.

As Paul prepared to visit Corinth again, he was uncertain as to the spiritual condition of the congregation there. He therefore gave them direction to examine themselves to be sure that they had repented and forsaken all sin and immorality, lest he should need to discipline them when he arrived. Paul also assured them that all of his administrative actions stemmed from a heart of love and a desire for their edification.

In these two chapters, Paul presented a pattern of sound church administration with the goal of maintaining and promoting wholesome church life. Every believer can contribute to the preservation and perfection of the church.

The church's role in preserving the believer's spiritual life places a grave accountability on her leaders. By the enabling power of God, faithful leaders diligently apply Bible principles and exercise love and selflessness.

The church of Jesus Christ is a body of believers called "out of darkness into his marvellous light." God has provided for the well-being of the church through the gifts He has bestowed upon the members and through the establishment of leadership who are to serve under Christ. The code of ethics is defined in God's Holy Word.

In order for the church to prosper and fulfill God's mission, she must follow God's plan for church administration. This lesson explains that plan and should build appreciation for the master Designer of the church and for her God-appointed leaders. Spiritual leaders continue to build the church of Jesus Christ today. Read Ephesians 4:1-16 and be inspired by the lofty purpose (Ephesians 4:7, 11), the ample provisions (Ephesians 4:12-16), and the abundant blessings (4:16) for the church.

**Lesson Aim:** To present principles for effective, Biblical church administration.

**Theme Verses:** [Ephesians 4:11-12](#). And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

## Lesson Text

### "I Seek ... You"

[2 Corinthians 12:14-21](#) <sup>14</sup> Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. <sup>15</sup> And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. <sup>16</sup> But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. <sup>17</sup> Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? <sup>18</sup> I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps? <sup>19</sup> Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. <sup>20</sup> For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: <sup>21</sup> *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

### "Even Your Perfection"

[2 Corinthians 13:1-14](#) <sup>1</sup> *This is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. <sup>2</sup> I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: <sup>3</sup> Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. <sup>4</sup> For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by

the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. <sup>5</sup> Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? <sup>6</sup> But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. <sup>7</sup> Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. <sup>8</sup> For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. <sup>9</sup> For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. <sup>11</sup> Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with an holy kiss. <sup>13</sup> All the saints salute you. <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

## **Questions for Study**

### **"I Seek ... You"**

1. List some ways in which Paul sacrificed for the church.
2. What is the goal of church discipline?
3. How might church leaders preserve and promote cohesion among the members?

### **"Even Your Perfection"**

4. How did Paul exemplify the resurrection power of Christ?
5. In what ways do leaders promote spiritual growth in the church?
6. How can we enhance the effectiveness of our leaders?
7. How do the threefold aspects of Paul's benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14) affect the fruitfulness of church administration?
8. List some blessings of sound church administration.

## **Analyzing the Passage**

In 2 Corinthians 12:14, Paul was likely referring to the Corinthians as his spiritual children. He testified of his readiness to "spend and be spent" for them. His self-sacrificing love sought their present and future well-being.

Edifying (12:19) is the act of building up for spiritual profit or advancement. Paul was saying that the real focus of his administrative work was to build them up spiritually and help them to be a holy people so that they might experience the richest blessings of Christ Jesus and ultimately be a part of His chosen bride.

Compare 13:1 with Deuteronomy 19:15 and Matthew 18:16. Only upon the agreement of several witnesses may complaints be received and the truth verified.

Reprobates (2 Corinthians 13:5, 7) are "unapproved, rejected, or worthless." This is in contrast to approved (2 Corinthians 13:7). Paul desired that the Corinthians be approved by putting away evil and living honestly.

Perfection (2 Corinthians 13:9) implies a process leading to completion. Paul's vision and desire was to "fully prepare" God's people for the eternal consummation, when Christ and His bride, the church, will be joined in eternal union—eternally perfected.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"I Seek ... You"**

1. Spiritual leaders are glad to sacrifice for the souls of their people (2 Corinthians 12:14-15). Understanding the worth of souls helps them to remain undaunted and persistent in caring for the flock. They spend many hours in prayer. Their daily schedule is filled with pressing duties—meetings, sermon preparation, and personal work for the well-being of souls, besides providing for the natural needs of their families. Concern for others motivates faithful service.

2. Faithful ministers seek for loving obedience, not material gain (2 Corinthians 12:14-18). "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). Loving obedience proves one's loyalty to Christ (John 14:15).

Faithful leaders recognize the dangers of a salaried ministry and seek to follow the example of the Head of the church. But a spiritual brotherhood will support their leaders with a helping hand with their material needs.

3. The effective ministerial team is unified (2 Corinthians 12:18). Although individual gifts and responsibilities vary, leaders must be united in their goals—to preserve sound church life and to exalt Christ. Good

communication, consistent direction, and proper interdependence produce a solid platform from which to exercise church authority. Harmonious relationships can be difficult to achieve, but they are a Scriptural imperative. Rivalry and contention will certainly prove disastrous.

The congregation must be careful not to disrupt the team effort of their leaders. "He that soweth discord among brethren" is an abomination to God. Constructive criticism is needed at times, but it must be given in humility and love.

4. Faithful ministers labor to edify the church (2 Corinthians 12:19). Their preaching and teaching include both doctrinal and practical subjects in an effort to build personal conviction. Visiting in the homes of the congregation and relating to special needs builds relationships.

5. Effective leaders administer church discipline as needed (2 Corinthians 12:20-21; 2 Corinthians 13:2). Dealing with sin requires both courage and discretion. Redemptive discipline is firm, yet tempered with love and sympathy. Disciplining with carnal motives results in condemnation, partiality, and failure. Proper discipline brings rest, and it encourages a holy fear of God.

### **"Even Your Perfection"**

6. Faithful leaders sense their need of resurrection power (2 Corinthians 13:3-4). Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." A faithful leader recognizes his insufficiency and reaches out for divine resources. Paul concluded, "When I am weak [in myself], then am I strong [in Christ]" (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Such dependence leaves no room for either self-praise or self-pity. It is a simple faith in the great eternal One who calls leaders to serve.

7. Spiritual leaders encourage their people to examine themselves (2 Corinthians 13:5). Self-examination is necessary to assess spiritual progress. Personal Bible study and prayer contribute to this. Revival and semi-annual counsel meetings call for more intense self-examination. The Holy Spirit will be faithful in revealing needs if our attitude is like that of the psalmist: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

8. Truth must be the basis of all church administration (2 Corinthians 13:8). God's Word is the final authority for right living. It is also the absolute standard whereby men will be judged. The Scriptures establish

the principles whereby church life should be governed. A Scripturally based discipline gives practical direction for applying these principles. Consistent administration of such a discipline contributes to holy living and a unified practice.

9. Faithful leaders nurture spiritual growth in their constituency (2 Corinthians 13:9, 11). They strive to give a balanced diet in their preaching. They encourage personal Bible study and sharing the Gospel with others. Intercessory prayer is among the most important aspects of nurture and perhaps the most neglected. But prayer does change things! It results in blessing both for the one who prays and for the one prayed for.

10. The Lord has authorized leaders to administrate the church (2 Corinthians 13:10). Matthew 16:18-19 tells us that Jesus clearly gave authority to church leaders. This authority is to be exercised under the supreme authority of Christ, the Head of the church. Spiritual leaders are careful to exercise their roles in the fear of God. It is their charge to administer the ordinances and be faithful watchmen.

11. Unity and peace in the brotherhood are necessary for the work of the ministry to be effective (2 Corinthians 13:11). "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). Humility needs to grace each action. Christian love is the bond of perfection. Where the peace of God rules in the heart, willing obedience is the norm, and the people have a mind to work.

Negative attitudes toward church authority or unmerited criticism can so easily undermine peace and unity. Speaking respectfully of our brethren helps to build appreciation for the church.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Spiritual leaders are glad to sacrifice for the souls of their people (2 Corinthians 12:14, 15).
2. Faithful ministers seek for loving obedience, not material gain (2 Corinthians 12:14-18).
3. The effective ministerial team is unified (2 Corinthians 12:18).
4. Faithful ministers labor to edify the church (2 Corinthians 12:19).
5. Effective leaders administer church discipline as needed (2 Corinthians 12:20, 21; 13:2).
6. Faithful leaders sense their need of resurrection power (2 Corinthians

13:3, 4).

7. Spiritual leaders encourage their people to examine themselves (2 Corinthians 13:5).

8. Truth must be the basis of all church administration (2 Corinthians 13:8).

9. Faithful leaders nurture spiritual growth in their constituency (2 Corinthians 13:9, 11).

10. The Lord has authorized leaders to administrate the church (2 Corinthians 13:10).

11. Unity and peace in the brotherhood are necessary for the work of the ministry to be effective (2 Corinthians 13:11).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. List some ways in which Paul sacrificed for the church.

Paul spent many years traveling and preaching the Word of God. He prayed faithfully for the church. He suffered at the hands of persecutors. He willingly risked his reputation in standing for truth and in dealing with sin. Paul worked zealously to purge the church of false teachers and sinful living, defending his apostleship on the basis of truth. Finally, he died as a martyr.

2. What is the goal of church discipline?

The goal of church discipline is to keep the church pure and to promote spiritual growth and victory in her members. Church discipline is to help an erring member acknowledge his sin and repent so that he may be restored to fellowship. Exposing and reproving sin helps to maintain a proper fear of God.

3. How might church leaders preserve and promote cohesion among the members?

As a ministerial team is unified, their leadership provides consistency, clarity, and stability. Consistent, timely discipline also helps to preserve and promote unity in the brotherhood. Leaders should give commendation and encouragement when appropriate. They encourage members to take personal responsibility through self-examination.

4. How did Paul exemplify the resurrection power of Christ?

Paul's unwavering commitment and sacrificial labors give evidence of divine enablement. He boldly proclaimed the message of salvation. He led a righteous life worthy to be followed. He served for God's honor

and glory. He dealt firmly but redemptively with sin, striving to lead the people on to perfection.

5. In what ways do leaders promote spiritual growth in the church? They feed the flock with balanced and nourishing messages. They also help the people to feed themselves through meaningful personal Bible study and prayer life. Maintaining a pure fellowship provides an atmosphere conducive to right living. Upholding Scriptural doctrines and applications builds the convictions necessary for stability. Cultivating a father—son relationship with those who are younger in the faith is another important aspect of effective leadership.

6. How can we enhance the effectiveness of our leaders?

"Know them which labour among you." Doing our part to build personal relationships with spiritual leaders helps us share in the burden of the work. Exercising respect and courtesy toward them and their office makes it easier for them to help us. A humble, teachable spirit will respond properly to their direction or correction. Our self-examination and self-discipline will lighten their load. We can pray regularly for them and serve willingly where we are placed. We can assist them in their material labors, taking them to preaching assignments or supplying them a meal. Words of appreciation help also.

7. How do the threefold aspects of Paul's benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14) affect the fruitfulness of church administration?

Paul clearly understood the need for divine help to accomplish God's work. Grace through our Lord Jesus Christ sustains the work; love of the Father motivates the work; and the communion of the Holy Ghost empowers the work. The harmony of the Trinity is the basis for harmony in the church.

8. List some blessings of sound church administration.

Sound church administration fulfills the Great Commission. It prepares and preserves the bride of Christ for the eternal union in heaven. Christ's ministry is perpetuated. God's people are fruitful. Sound administration provides a place where believers can reach their highest potential for the honor and glory of Christ, the living Head. It also provides a wall of defense against Satan and his forces.

## Summarizing the Lesson

Lord, speak to me that I may speak,  
In living echoes of Thy tone:  
As thou hast sought, so let me seek,  
Thy erring children lost and lone.

O lead me, Lord, that I may lead  
The wand'ring and the wav'ring feet;  
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed  
Thy hung'ring ones with manna sweet.

O fill me with Thy fullness, Lord,  
Until my very heart o'erflow  
In kindling thought and glowing word,  
Thy love to tell, thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,  
Just as thou wilt, and when, and where;  
Until Thy blessed face I see,  
Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.  
—Frances R. Havergal

## Research Guide

1. Read the chapters titled "The Christian Church" and "The Ministry" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.
2. Read chapters 6 and 7 in *The Doctrine of the Church* by Eastern Mennonite Publications.
3. Study Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 12.