

TEAMS: THE SKILLS FOR THE WORK // Romans 16:3-16; Eph. 4:11-13; Romans 12:1-3; Phil. 2:1-4
Message from the series, Polity: Church Structures in Baptist Life

The long list of names in Romans 16 points to the fact that Paul recognized fellow workers in the gospel. These individuals weren't elders or deacons, but they were a vital part of the ministry of the church.

Many churches use committees as a way to involve members in the work of ministry. Although committees can vary from one to the next, a common definition is as follows: A selected group of church members authorized by the church to provide aid and support in the planning and execution of ministry in the church.

1. Biblical Material

There is no biblical command or example promoting committees in the New Testament. Does this mean the committees are unbiblical? No—because there's also no command against committees in the New Testament church. Committees (or the lack thereof) are a product of the church—it's a matter of preference. There are four reasons many choose to have or not have committees:

1. **Biblical silence.** The Bible does not speak about committees at all, so a church may take that to mean that committees should be embraced or avoided.
2. **Tradition.** A church will generally continue with the same polity with which they started. People who prefer a committee-rich church will join churches with committees and those who do not like them will not.
3. **Widespread use of committees in the secular world.** This means that some will embrace committees because it seems like the obvious choice for organizing the work of the church, and others will avoid committees because they feel they should be different from the world.
4. **The eldership model.** Churches with single elders generally have more committees. More elders, fewer committees.

2. Current Reality

Our church has chosen to have committees. What that generally means is that a committee has six people serving three-year terms. Every year, two to three people come onto a committee and two or three come off. The nominating committee (which is voted on by the church itself) is responsible for filling committees—for nominating people to these roles. In a sense, the nominating committee can end up operating like a small board of directors.

3. Remedial Suggestions

The concept of the committee is an extrabiblical category, but it can be insulated with biblical principles. We cannot take the rules for elders and deacons and apply them to committees—that would be unbiblical. The only other category recognized in the Bible is that of the individual believer—and those directives can be applied to committees, which are, after all, made up of individual believers.

1. **The goal of every committee must be discipleship** (Ephesians 4: 11-13). We need gifted people equipped for the work of ministry in the church.
2. **Church committees must promote individual members' giftings** (Romans 12: 3-8). Serving the church goes beyond serving on a committee. There should be room for everyone to use their gifts to serve a ministry.
3. **Church committees must promote church unity** (Philippians 2:1-4). We must strive to be a united church. That means united internally within a committee and a unity among the various committees in the church. Disunity in the committees will quickly infect the rest of the church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does our church have committees? To what degree do each of the suggestions above match our circumstances.
2. How can various committees promote discipleship?
3. Why is unity so important with committees?