

# THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS CHURCH

## Submission to Jesus as the Head of His Church

The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the head of the church. Historically, in local congregations, there are three main forms of government in Christian churches, with variations on each form. At Calvary Chapel, the type of government used is Episcopal, the same as that of most Calvary Chapels. We think that this type is closest to the teaching in the Bible.

There is room for abuse in any system. The success of church government depends upon the trustworthiness of the pastor, the leaders and the elders.

### Episcopal

Episcopal government is the form that existed in the church for the first 15 centuries, and is still practiced by 80% or more of the church. This form is most in keeping with the New Testament model. The pastor of the church functions as an overseer. He is called of God (or should be), and functions with multiple elders, ministers and leaders.

#### Elements of Episcopal Government

- ♦ One pastor, many elders, ministers and leaders (Acts 15)
- ♦ The elders believe the pastor is called of God and gladly submit to his leadership.
- ♦ The pastor believes in and submits to the counsel and ministry of the appointed elders.
- ♦ The pastor is a teaching shepherd.

### Presbyterian

With John Calvin and the Reformation in the 1500's came a form of government in which elders had all of the authority and ruled the church. The pastor was the leading elder, and in Calvin's time, the system was not very different from the Episcopal form of government. Calvin himself originally appointed elders. Martin Luther functioned as Episcopal in the 15th century, but the Lutheran church became far more congregational when it came to America.

#### Elements of Presbyterian Government

- ♦ Many elders with the pastor as the head elder
- ♦ The elders make all decisions for the church body.

### Congregational

The newest form of church government is not from the Bible's teaching, but as a reaction to abuses within church government in England. Congregationalism puts the power into the hands of the voting member of the church (the congregation). The minister is hired by the congregation but with the congregation obeying the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Congregationalism came to America with the Puritans as democratic ideals dominated church life.

#### Elements of Congregational Government

- ♦ The pastor is hired by the congregation.
- ♦ All church decisions are made by a vote of the congregation. Majority rules, not the teaching of the Word of God.