



Resources

THE SEVEN VALUES OF FAMILY GOVERNANCE

BY JEFF LEAKE

All churches function by some type of legal structure. Every church has a Constitution and By-Laws which define who leads, how decisions are made, what the standards are for membership and leadership.

But since the New Testament does not include a document with 'inspired' Constitutional specifics, the best that we can do is discern certain values and principles of function based on the book of Acts and the Epistles.

Most historic church governance structures fall into two categories:

1. **Episcopal** – This is a top-down form of governance. The most famous denomination that uses this model is the Catholic Church. Authority flows from the Pope down to Cardinals, to Bishops, to Priests, to People.
2. **Congregational** – This is a bottom-up form of governance. Historically the Assemblies of God has used this form of structure. Authority flows up from the people to the Board, to the Pastor.

Another way of describing these two forms of governance is through more familiar terms:

- Dictatorship – The leader decides.
- Democracy – The majority decides.

This is a fairly simplified definition of things, but these polar opposite concepts create for us the tension involved in any group of people that are trying to function. An additional challenge is the fact that neither of these above models completely represents the kind of attitudes and values visible in the Bible when it comes to a local church.

So I am attempting to outline a new paradigm for church governance. I know that is a fairly large task. The two words that most aptly define this new paradigm are the words **THEOCRACY** and **FAMILY**. A Theocracy is what the nation of Israel was originally designed to be. Theocracy means – God rules, God decides.

The local church is a theocracy in that Jesus is the Head of His body which is the church. So any effective church will seek and obey His leadership in what they do.

But theocracy alone is very hard to understand and apply. How do we know we have heard from God? Who interprets what Jesus is saying to His church? How do we carry out His will in unity?

This is where the second word comes in: **FAMILY**. My theory is the local church should function much like a family. The principles involved in healthy family governance should be applied to the way a local church family does its work.

So let's journey through these **FAMILY VALUES** together.

Value #1: Family vs. Institution

The foundational value for how the church should function is based on the core nature of the church. Rick Warren talks about how the nature of the church should determine its function. We should not pattern the church after governments, business concepts, or community organizations.

The Bible uses several metaphors to describe its nature, Body, Flock, Army, Fellowship, Bride, but probably the most impacting metaphor that the Bible uses is the idea that the church is a **FAMILY**. When we look at decision making, or discipline, or we define structure we should keep the family concept as our guiding principle.

Consider the way Paul implores Timothy (who was leading the church at Ephesus) to teach people to relate to one another. [1 Timothy chapter five](#) opens up with these words:

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Consider the TONE of how our relationships should be. This is not the tone of an institution. This is not the tone we find in politics, or business, or government.

- We appeal to a Father and respect his role and position.
- We treat younger men as brothers. We challenge, but in love and with faith.
- We are tender and respectful toward spiritual mom's.
- We protect and cherish our sisters.

Now dysfunctional family is not a good model either. But healthy family is what we are shooting for. There is no harshness, suspicion, posturing, political maneuvering, manipulation or control. Instead there is trust, respect, forgiveness, positive negotiating, coaching, and loving correction.

So we need to begin here. How does a healthy family function? How does a church work like a family? What about in decision making? What about in accountability? How do we make this concept practical?

How can we think less like an institution and more like a happy healthy family?

Value #2: Agreement vs. Voting

If we use the '**FAMILY**' metaphor as the grid through which we look at church governance, we have to ask, '**How does a family govern itself? How do family decisions get made?**'

In my family, with five kids, I understand the breakdown that occurs when we decide to have every family member involved in a vote. Instantly, the dynamic of our family breaks down and we have family members opposing one another to get their way.

As a father, part of my job is **to teach my family the principles of agreement**. They need to learn how to honor one another, how to defer to one another. They need to be taught to be considerate and giving.

The over-riding principle of family decision making is this: **IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER WHAT WE DECIDE TO DO AS LONG AS WE DECIDE TO DO IT TOGETHER.**

Voting is a political process. **It brings with it a political atmosphere**. It leads people to ask one central question: WHAT DO I WANT? or WHAT DO I THINK IS BEST?

It requires people to agree with your opinion to get your way. Therefore, voting not only reinforces a **self-centered thought process, it encourages you to mobilize your influence to get what you want**. This might work well in our national government--but it is truly poisonous to a family environment.

So what's the alternative in a church family? Lead people to a place of common agreement, not by enforcing a dictatorship, and not by operating through democracy.

1. **Vision** - this should begin with the Pastor. The Biblical pattern is for God to choose a person to lead the way. He never chooses to give His vision first to a committee, but always to a called individual.
2. **Wisdom** - Proverbs talks about how an abundance of counselors will make a strategy sound and effective. So the Leadership Teams of the church should be involved in adding wisdom to the vision.

3. **Information** - the overall church family should be given advanced and reasoned information before any big decision.
4. **Input** - one great benefit of 'voting' is that everyone has a say. But voting provides a limited voice to the family. It typically requires 'yes' or 'no' answers. Family members should have the opportunity to make things better. How? **Instead of taking a vote we should strategically use SURVEYS.** This will give potentially solid data to the Leaders as to how to proceed and what the level of agreement there is in the family.
5. **Prayer** - a major key in the process is gaining direction from Heaven. So as the entire church family becomes aware of the situation at hand, they can be involved in the process of intercession. It is here that further input can happen as gifts of the Spirit are in operation through members of the family.
6. **Discussion** - the survey information, the direction from the Spirit, the data involved should then be brought to discussion on levels of leadership throughout the church family (executive team, board, staff, elders). They should then make a recommendation to the church family.
7. **Affirmation** - this is the opportunity for the church family to add their agreement or offer their caution about the decision.

Value #3: Affirmation vs. Election

What about leadership selection? How does a family select its leadership?

In a natural family the selection process is fairly obvious. Those who have reproduced (the parents) and birthed the family are those who are given the charge of leadership.

What about in a spiritual family? The principle can apply here as well, but of course not in the physical sense. But leadership in the church is given not only to those who are more mature, older, or wiser--it is given to those who will help reproduce character and ministry in others.

Ephesians 4:11-16 states why God gave 'leadership gifts' to the church...*to equip God's people for works of service that the body of Christ might be built up and reach the measure of the fullness of Christ.*

So spiritual leadership for the church is always put in the hands of its equipping gifts – the EQUIPPERS.

We establish their role by recognizing the gift that is on their life and affirming their leadership. Now, an equipping gift may or may not be used by a 'full-time' pastor. Most often it is wise to release an equipper to do that job full-time. But the gift is the gift. It doesn't require a career for it to operate.

So we must ask who are the primary equippers of this church? These equippers should form and function much like the governing elders did in Ephesus (according to 1 Timothy) or the church counsel in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Alongside of the **EQUIPPERS** should be the **EXPERTS**. Who are they? In Acts 6 the equipper elders appointed seven experts (deacons) at meeting the practical needs of the people of the Jerusalem church. It just makes sense to solicit and release the good counsel and practical skills of the members of the church family.

But how do we identify the equippers?

- Obvious gift and function as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher.
- A following of people who are being equipped and mobilized in ministry.
- A demonstration of personal responsibility for groups of people who are in the church or need to be reached. Not positional but rather result-oriented.
- Fruitful lifestyle and ministry.
- Of course along with that there must be the Biblical qualifications of eldership mentioned in 1 Timothy, Acts 6, and Titus.

In a larger congregation, the governing and equipping elders should be the leaders of the leaders or the equippers of the equippers.

The second type of governing leaders is the **EXPERTS, those with needed wisdom, experience, or skill necessary for effective function**. In Acts 6, they selected six Experts to help the apostles to care for the needy members of the congregation. This was the pressing issue of the time, so they selected men who would be able to deal with this issue with excellence.

The apostles (**EQUIPPERS**) were to remain focused on spiritual leadership/governance and devote themselves to prayer and the Word. The Deacons (which means those who serve in the dust) (**EXPERTS**) were to use their wisdom skills, organization, and business expertise to make sure that the practical needs of the church family were being met.

It is interesting to note that some of the Experts (Philip and Stephen) actually grew in their role and became EQUIPPERS also. Both became effective preachers in their own right.

It makes sense to me in the appointment of **EXPERTS**, that we select based on what is needed in the body at the moment. What are the skill sets or wisdom gifts needed for the season the church is currently experiencing? After determining that, we should allow the body to affirm or ratify that these leaders meet the character/spiritual qualifications as well (Acts 6...full of wisdom, the spirit, and faith).

It is apparent from Acts 6 that the people were not selecting a representative government in affirming the deacons. In Acts 6 there were not winners and losers. It was not that some were selected to serve and others were not. The body simply agreed with those presented to them. There was an opportunity for someone to object to the leadership or character of one of the seven presented. When there was no objection, the seven presented began to serve.

So what kind of expertise is needed? In general, men of prayer who are people who lead their own families well and understand what is needed in healthy family function. More specifically, there may be needs for strategic planning, personnel management, construction, design, insurance, security, business development, accounting, or a host of other skills and experience.

It would be most beneficial to any family to have the appropriate expertise available at its time of need. This is also true of a church family.

The major objection to this approach is this question: If leaders are affirmed and not elected...if they are not representatives of the people but rather experts selected for a time of need...then who **KEEPS AN EYE ON THE PASTOR?** Where is there accountability? Who speaks for the people? How do we protect ourselves from the abuses of an over-empowered leader?

Value #4: Fathering vs. Impeachment

Without a doubt, the most important issue in governance comes in the area of correction and conflict. How do we handle it when family members don't get along? What do we do when board members and the pastor have a disagreement? What about if the pastor goes off?

To prevent abuse of power and protect our interest, often we revert to very unbiblical and truly unhealthy methods of dealing with conflict and disagreement. When we resort to political solutions to solve family problems we develop a culture of suspicion, division, gossip, and gridlock. Many church families never recover from mishandling a moment of conflict.

So how do families properly handle conflict?

The Bible gives an explicit process for it. It is found in Matthew 18:15-17 and it gives very direct steps to take to practice healthy church family conflict resolution skills. Here's the process:

1. **Personal Private Confrontation** - when a brother/sister offends you (or you are concerned for their direction), go to them and talk to them about it. Don't talk to anyone else about it. Don't call the prayer chain about it. Talk to them in love.
2. **Mediation** - if that does not work, then bring along one or two mature objective leaders to help resolve the problem. Through a mediator an agreement can be negotiated and terms executed so that offenses can be resolved and unity regained.
3. **Church Leadership Action** - If it turns out that a person refuses to stop their destructive behavior, it may be necessary for the Leaders of a church family to take the step of loving, redemptive dis-fellowship.

Let's apply this process in its most basic everyday function.

- If a member has a problem with the pastor, that member should talk to the pastor first...not to a board member or anyone else. If the problem is not resolved, the pastor or member has the right to bring a mediator to help resolve whatever the challenge is.
- If a pastor has a problem with a board member, or another pastor--they should talk to the person privately first. Most situations resolve without any other steps.

When conflicts between brothers or differences of opinions are brought into a meeting, and votes are taken to resolve the issue, the decisions made create permanent fault lines in relationships. Many times people are cowardly in their dealing with problems. They want to spring an issue in a meeting (Board, Business Meeting, etc) because they feel like there will be more support for 'their side' in a group setting.

It's the same reason why an offended person says, "I am not the only one who feels this way!", when they bring the issue up. What that actually reveals is that the Matthew 18 process has already been violated by talking it around (gossip) prior to the personal meeting.

One of the primary jobs of a Lead Pastor is the teaching of Matthew 18 and the guarding of family harmony by insisting on its practice.

What if the PASTOR is the PROBLEM?

What do we do when board members and the pastor have a disagreement?

What if the pastor goes off?

These are the BIG questions and very valid concerns we have in any discussion of church governance. So let me state it very clearly, THERE MUST BE ACCOUNTABILITY! It is irresponsible to think that anyone is above needing confrontation or correction. There are thousands of stories that could be shared about abuse of power, descent into self-destruction, embezzlement, and other forms of poor or harmful leadership.

So if the pastor is like the 'father' in a family (remember we are using the 'Family Governance' model), then how does Dad receive correction when he becomes offensive?

Before I answer that, let me just make the simple observation that people in authority have the potential to do the most harm. Power wielded for self-interest leaves a wake of wounded followers. No one else can impact the organization as negatively or as positively than the person charged with leadership.

That's why it is so essential that a leader maintains an attitude of **HUMILITY** and that an organization (church family) maintains good processes of **ACCOUNTABILITY**.

So how is the 'father' (leader/pastor) corrected and confronted?

1. **THE FOUNDATION** - follow the same pattern of Matthew 18 as is used for everyone else. The first two steps of the process do not take into consideration a person's position. They are to be applied to everyone regardless of their level of leadership. So if the pastor needs confronted, you do what the Bible says: a) talk to him personally and privately; b) if that doesn't resolve the issue, then bring along a mediator.
2. **THE DISCIPLINE PROCESS** - But what about step #3? What happens if a mediator cannot resolve the issue? Who has authority over the pastor? The church board? The people? The members? How can this issue be handled well?

The answer to this lies again in the FAMILY metaphor. In a government when a president has become unworthy of office, we IMPEACH them. They are voted out. In a business, when a CEO is not being effective, we IMPEACH (or fire) them. They are voted out by a Board of Directors. But what about in a family?

In a healthy multi-generational family, correction could come to a father by his own father. When dad has gone wrong, granddad is needed. Then correction can come to a leader in a loving, face to face, redemptive relationship rather than through an ugly, political, committee-based voting process.

Think of the metaphor of **FAMILY**. God never intended for wives to discipline their husbands. Yes, an open husband should always be humble enough to listen to his wife. If he doesn't, he is a FOOL. But this is precisely what we are talking about here. What happens when the man is a fool?

Wives trying to correct their foolish husbands come across as nagging and disrespectful. Kids trying to correct their dad's foolishness is both impractical and ineffective. It also puts an unnatural strain on the maturity of the kids involved. They were not built to handle the strain of a foolish father.

In the same way, boards and church members were never designed, according to the Bible, to lead and correct a foolish pastor. So who assumes that role? Who is your pastor's pastor? To whom is your pastor submitted?

Every pastor/leader should have at least one (preferably several) spiritual fathers in their life to whom they are committed and submitted. And when a pastor refuses the normal process of Matthew 18; when they cease to listen to advice; when they are not humble enough to receive relational suggestions and correction; and when a greater authority is needed--it is then that we look to this pastor's pastor.

Value #5: Leadership vs. Representation

The foundation of any discussion on governance has to do with authority. Who has ultimate authority? Where do we look for direction? Whose will rules?

Let's consider the option:

- Democracy - Majority Rules.
- Republic - the Law rules.
- Business - the Board of Directors (who represent the stockholders) rules.
- Dictatorship - the Leader rules.
- Theocracy - God rules.
- Family - Unity rules. (as led and taught by Dad and Mom).

Church governance, as best as I can Biblically discern, is to be a combination of the last two authority structures. **Ultimately, the church is to be a Theocracy. Jesus is declared the HEAD of the church.** That puts Him in charge.

The central question of any decision making has to be, **WHAT IS THE WILL OF JESUS?** Anything less than that will find a church family fighting against the Will of Jesus and pursuing their own agenda. This should be the central question of every natural family as well. What does Jesus want in my home?

Authority rests in the hands of Jesus. Discernment and the ability to decide to properly follow Christ rests in the hands of the leaders in a church family.

Effective church leaders should try to balance two issues:

1. What does Jesus want?
2. How can we follow His will in a way that involves the whole family and keeps us together in healthy relationships and in as much agreement as is possible?

Since that is the case, church leaders should function less as representatives of the people (democracy) and more as representatives of Christ (theocracy). The goal is not to execute the will of the people or the decisions of the majority, but rather to mobilize the church family to adopt and execute the Will of God.

Probably the best Biblical example contrasting 'representation' and 'leadership' is the Numbers 13-14 narrative.

1. God was speaking to Moses that it was time to enter the promised land. Since Israel was primarily a 'theocracy' (God rules), there was really no alternative. Where God is concerned, it is either obedience or disobedience.
2. Moses decides to collect data and build wisdom in preparing to enter. So he selected 12 Representatives, one from each tribe. Their assignment was to decide whether or not to obey God's purpose. Their assignment was to investigate what it would take to enter the land effectively.
3. Ten of the 12 Representatives listened to the grumbling of the people and VOTED to go back to Egypt. They voted to disobey the Will of God. It is interesting to note here that often the majority can fail to be accurate in discerning the will of God.
4. This is where leadership is needed. We see three leaders in this story. Moses, Caleb, and Joshua all were more concerned with representing God's Will to the people.
5. The result of the Ten Representatives' decision to follow the will of the people was 38 additional years of wandering in the wilderness.

In a Democracy or Union, those elected are to represent the will of the people. In a Theocracy, those who are selected to lead should represent the Will of God to the people. They are chosen because they can lead their church family to follow God's Will with sensitivity and wisdom.

In a family, the parents are also to help their children to follow God's Will. The process involves more than just decrees and discipline. The process involves loving, tender instruction. It involves shepherding and guidance out of a caring relationship.

An effective parent is not so much concerned with getting their own way. They are concerned with the well being of the family and the growth and maturity of their children. Decisions are made with those two ideals in mind.

When you consider the role of Moses as the leader of Israel, you can see that he led out of personal sacrifice. He paid a higher price for leading God's people than anyone within that community. The people accused Moses of being a self-serving dictator, but God continually affirmed him as the point person for leadership.

Now a common objection is that this theocratic/family governance approach puts a tremendous amount of responsibility on the point person. They have the potential to make or break the entire process!!!

This is true! And it is for that very reason that **the most important qualification for leadership on any level is the quality of HUMILITY**. In fact, I will go so far as to say that in any of the governance structures (democracy, republic, business models)--if you don't have HUMBLE leaders, the entire system breaks down.

In the book, Good To Great, this type of leader is described. Collins calls them LEVEL 5 Leaders. They have a combination of HUMILITY and DRIVE. Any organization that has a leader that does not have Humility and Drive will be an organization in some level of crisis.

Value #6: Teamwork vs. Membership

What is the difference between the two? **Team Member vs. Club Member?**

- **Team members should have a greater commitment to the interests of the whole.** Club members have a commitment to their own personal interest and seek to protect those interests appropriately.
- **Team members give 100% effort so that team goals can be accomplished.** Club members expect that the club give 100% so that their desires can be satisfied.
- **Team members are expected to fulfill their assigned role and carry out their specific responsibilities.** Club members can do what they want as long as they stay within the basic rules of participation and consistently pay their dues.
- **Team members are accountable for the success or failure of their team.** They own the challenges and celebrate the victories. They are also accountable to one another. If a team member ceases to perform, the other members should rightly challenge them. Club members are accountable to not violate rules and policies. Their job is to enjoy the club. They are kept accountable to pay their dues. But they do not own the success or failure of the club. They expect management to tackle the problems and produce a quality situation for them.
- **Team members stick together even when they are losing games (at least good team members do).** Club members feel the right to abandon a poor performing club to join another that can meet their needs better.

A Church Family is NOT a Club. It is a TEAM. Therefore, **Membership has less to do with rights and more to do with responsibilities.** A better word than Membership might be Partnership or Team Player.

In a natural family, children will not mature if they take a 'club member' mentality. Many kids do, unfortunately, take this posture. Maturing children will begin to own their family, participate in family challenges, contribute to the function of the home, and stick with their family even during difficult moments.

Church families will not build mature people if they take a 'club member' mentality. Many church members do, unfortunately. But maturing church people will own their church and its vision, participate in church family challenges, contribute to the ministry efforts of a church, and will stick with their family even during difficult moments.

In actuality, **this may be the most important value adjustment. If a church family thinks and acts like a winning team, then many challenges will be automatically overcome.**

Value #7: Purpose vs. Tradition

One of the amazing qualities of God is His creativity. **He is always doing a NEW thing.** Jesus modeled this throughout His ministry. Sometimes He would speak the Word and healing would flow. Then at other times, he would spit on the dirt and apply mud to a man's eyes and healing would happen.

Following Jesus is an adventure. It is never dull. It is rarely static. It is typically not safe, requires risk, and does not feel comfortable. But obedience to His leading always leads to incredible miracles and breakthroughs.

Now the tendency in any long-term community or organization is to move toward things that are safe, same, and secure. Religious organizations are famous for codifying rules, and locking in restrictions. In order for an organization to be stable, policies multiply and structures become more rigid. Controls are put in place and committees discuss and attempt to manage and/or limit change.

While most rules and restrictions are birthed out of good motives (to protect and preserve), the unintended result can be resistance to what God is doing in the NOW.

Therefore, **it is critical for church families to stay attached to the future and not to the past.** It is imperative for any church body that claims to follow the HEAD (Jesus Christ) to remain humble and ready to hear His current directives. It is essential that we not make a 'god' out of the traditions that make us comfortable but not necessarily obedient.

If a local church family is to stay fluid and flexible enough to follow a NOW word from God, there are several things that are most helpful:

- **When it comes to constitutions, by-laws, policies, and restrictions - LESS IS MORE.** Families don't operate well by written laws anyway. Relationships guide a family. Now obviously some by-laws and policies are necessary to function legally. But to remain ready for what is next and prepared as a church for the future, the guiding principle is LESS IS MORE.

- **When it comes to decision-making the biggest question is not, What Have We Done?, it is rather 'What Is God Doing?'** Churches that value their heritage more than their future are destined to diminish. When we are tied to purpose more than tradition, we free the next generation to pursue God's fresh work.
- **When it comes to executing the Will of God and the direction of ministry, we choose SMALL GROUPS over committees.** We have chosen to limit the number of committees to an absolute minimum. We choose to empower the people who have the responsibility to do the ministry with the authority necessary to function. Rather than talk about it (as committees often do), we want to just do it (through the wisdom of relationships in a task force or small group).

We need to intentionally tie ourselves to God's PURPOSE. Whatever stands in the way of God's purpose being fulfilled must be removed or altered so that progress is not hindered. Even traditions must bow to purpose.

Now, let me qualify. Traditions in themselves are not bad. In fact, healthy families typically have specific traditions that become a sort of glue for healthy family function. They help us stick together. They remind us of our wonderful heritage. They bring back a sense of gratitude for the privilege of the family we belong to. **Traditions SHOULD BE MAINTAINED when they contribute to family health and purpose.**

But no tradition in and of itself is sacred. It was tradition to not heal on the Sabbath in Jesus day. But that did not stop Jesus from helping someone in need. Traditions should never impede purpose. **Healthy church families that remain effective over several generations intentionally tie themselves to God's purpose.**

Family Governance Objections

There are a few more Values to cover in this Family Governance Model, but I thought I would pause to address some significant objections/questions:

Q. What would keep the pastor from surrounding himself with 'yes-men' who were blindly following the lead of the pastor?

To answer this question, we need to consider what our options are and which are the best. What if the pastor is simply wanting to push his own agenda and not God's? What if the pastor is selecting 'yes' people who are corruptly administering finances or programming?

- We can VOTE out board members or the pastor and seek a political solution. The method will create a political environment and result in lasting division of some type.

- We can apply PETITION-like pressure and protest the leadership's decision. Again, this will not have an end result of health.
- We can use the Matthew 18 process and confront through the 3-steps. During step three we can appeal to the pastor's pastor. Not only is this the Biblical prescription it is the healthiest long-term approach.

The real problem is not the board/leaders selected, it is the unwillingness to listen to advice or to function according to ethical standards. If a pastor is this stubborn, it will require significant correction from the person to whom he is submitted.

It is very possible that a stubborn pastor won't submit. At that point, it might be necessary to 1) transition to another church; or 2) take measures to get a new pastor.

Q. What about that? How would a church remove a stubborn or failed Senior Pastor?

I guess this entire 'family governance' system could be described by the following phrase: **We always seek relational solutions to problems and not political ones.**

So what is the relational process of removing a Senior Pastor? The political process is fairly clear. It is the process of IMPEACHMENT. People or a Board votes to remove a leader and appoint a new one.

What is the relational solution to the removal of a Senior Pastor?

- The Bible says that we should not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or more witnesses. So this process of 'discipline' for a leader must be limited to very serious issues.
- When there is a problem, it should be handled through the Matthew 18 process (outlined earlier in this document).

What about when we hit phase three of the Matthew 18 process? A Senior Pastor is not listening to correction from his 'spiritual fathers', and not the advice of his board or from concerned members? What then?

- When the church Board feels that they have reached an impasse with their Senior Pastor, or when they feel the pastor is acting immorally or unethically, they should bring their concerns to the Accountability Group (spiritual fathers) that the Senior Pastor is personally accountable to.
- The Senior Pastor's Accountability (Fathers) Group and the local Church Board should decide together what actions steps to take to deal with the issue. Then they should seek to enforce that decision together for the benefit of the Senior Pastor and the church

In this approach there are several options available that are not present in the "Impeachment" approach that is typical in a democratic system.

1. They can offer the pastor a temporary redemptive sabbatical to deal with some issues in counseling so that the potential is there for him to be restored to leadership.
2. They can deal with some less serious (skill based or leadership) issues privately, and without involving the entire church in a debate or controversy.
3. Or if necessary, they may need to ask the Senior Pastor to step out of leadership. The Accountability Group can then seek to provide some redemptive solutions and processes for the Pastor even after he has resigned from that local church. Impeachment only allows for removal. It does not deal redemptively with a fallen or failed leader.

Another advantage of the Accountability Group's guidance and partnership with a local church and its board is the transition and search process for new leadership. This mature group of leaders can help step in and provide wisdom and spiritual leadership in determining how to strengthen the church during a difficult season.

A great example of this was the recent fall of Ted Haggard and New Life Church. The church was 14,000 in number. Their pastor fell into sin and dishonesty. When this was uncovered, the church board and Haggard's Accountability Group dealt with the crisis together.

- They removed him from leadership.
- They recommended a redemptive process for him.
- The Accountability Group all stood on the platform during this day of announcement. One of them addressed the church and took the questions from the media. They provided great leadership and backing to the local church during the storm.
- They helped the Board to appoint a Temporary Pastor.
- They guided the church to a number of qualified candidates for the future Senior Pastor.
- The church then decided on a new Senior Pastor. When he was installed, the Accountability Group joined with the Board in blessing and backing his ministry.

The New Life Church has not only survived this horrible crisis, they have remained strong and have a new and capable Senior Pastor leading them today. My opinion is that without the Accountability Group in place, this church would have had a very difficult time navigating through the maze and mess of their Senior Pastor's fall.

Q. What if the pastor is insecure and intimidated by people of excellence--and that leads him to surround himself with unwise or mediocre men? Or what if he picks board members who simply align with his selfish agenda?

In this instance, the problem is not so much with the governance system as it is the pastor. There is no governance plan that will overcome an insecure, selfish, or incompetent leader.

The only hope for that pastor/leader is to have a mentor or father in his life to coach him through this character struggle. Committees and boards were designed to support a leader not to lead a leader. Anytime a leader is failing to lead, boards can identify it, and they can recommend change. But it is up to the leader to lead.

In my opinion, the pastor's pastor (or group of fathers) is an even more critical group than is the church board when it comes to the pastor's character and leadership advancement. The church board is more important when it comes to the management of the finances and strategic plan of the church.

CONCLUSION:

Before attempting to form long-term strategies for a church Constitution and By-Laws, I thought it **best to establish and agree upon the VALUES that guide those decisions.** In my experience, once the **VALUES** are agreed upon, the specifics seem to work themselves out.

I also think that the **VALUES** are even more important than the By-Laws. Very few pastors, Board members, or Church members ever read or refer to the Church's guiding document. But **the VALUES become the grid through which we view the world.**

We should refer to the **VALUES** often. In fact, these values should be taught as a basis not just for church function, but in many ways, for improved natural family function. Most of these values are good guidelines for all types of relationships.

Before a church writes or adjusts its specific Constitutional structure, it should agree upon its values. **When the values are established, then the specifics of structure and function should simply express those values.**