

“I Will Build My Church”

Matthew 16:18

Jesus said,
“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”

(Matthew 16:18).

Is Local Church Membership A Command?

Before we attempt to answer that question we must have a definition of the word church. When we speak of the church we are talking about a local assembly of believers. It is important to understand that there is no such thing in the Scriptures as a universal or invisible church.

Is membership in a local church a command? If it is, I can't find the Scripture that says it is; however, some things are so obvious we do not need a command.

How foolish would it be if while Christ was explaining to His followers about organizing a local church if they were to ask if He really expected them to join it.

Question # 1

What scriptural reason will anyone be able to give the Lord for not joining the church for which He died?

Ephesians 5:25

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

One day, all of us Christians will give an account of our daily actions.

Second Corinthians 5:10

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”



What feeble explanation will you attempt to give your Saviour for refusing to join His church?

Question # 2

How can the following Scriptures be carried out without a local church membership?

Matthew 18:15-17

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

*17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the church:** but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”*

How do we “tell it unto” a universal “church?” Do we just open a window and yell



out the problem and hope it reaches the *universal, invisible* church in all the world? And should this invisible church hear it, how will they solve the problem?

Matthew 18:15-17 deals with discipline. How do we enact discipline on visitors who just happen to show up on a Sunday morning?

Will we have the visitors fill out a form letting us know about anyone they are having a problem with? Then, do we ask them if they would mind if we send two or more witnesses with them that we might establish the problem concerning whether or not we should consider them heathens or publicans?



The fact is, it is impossible to be obedient to Matthew 18:15-17 without a church membership.

Question # 3

How can the following Scriptures be carried out without a local church membership?

First Corinthians 5:12,13

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

What is God talking about when He commands us “not to keep company?”

The dictionary definition of “company” is “a number of individuals gathered together for a particular purpose.”

Let the Scriptures explain themselves.

All of the Scriptures below are in the context of the local church.

Acts 4:23 - “Their own company.”

Acts 14:22 - “Their own company.”

Second Thessalonians 3:14 - “Have no company.”



Without And Within?

“For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within?”

13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

Who are they that are “without”? Who are they that are “within”? Who is God talking about when He refers to someone that is “among yourselves”?

“No not to eat”?

First Corinthians 5:12,13



“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”

What does a wife do if her husband has been disciplined by the local church? Is she not allowed to have a meal with him? That makes no sense. The phrase “not to eat” has reference to the communion service in a local church.

The fact is, it is impossible to be obedient to First Corinthians 5:12,13 outside of a local church context.

Question # 4

How can the following Scriptures be carried out without a local church membership?

First Corinthians Chapter 5:1

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you.”

Notice, it says, “among you.” The guilty person must be “taken away from among you” (v.2). How could we possibly do that without a church membership?

Verse 6

“Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

Was Paul talking about an invisible, universal “lump” being filled with leaven? How stupid is that?

Verse 7

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.”

How do we purge out the old leaven of an invisible, universal church? Will the new lump be a new invisible, universal “lump”? How can we possibly be obedient to this verse in a church that has no membership?

Question # 6

Who Is “Ruling Over” Who?

Hebrews 13:7

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”

What para-church ministry leaders have the rule over you? The faith of what para-church ministry leader will you “follow”?

Considering the end of their conversation?

The Greek word translated “consider” here translated “beheld” in Acts 17:23. It means to observe a thing or a person. The Greek word conversation in this verse refers to the manner of life, conduct, or behaviour of a person.

When writing the Thessalonian church members

Paul said,

“For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” (Second Thessalonians 3:7).

Paul said, “ye ought to follow us” who were “among you.”

Paul said, “For yourselves know...we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you” (v.7).

Paul said, they were “example unto you.” (v.9).

Paul said, “we were with you” (v.10).

These verses make no sense outside of the context of a local church.

Question # 7

How can the following Scripture be obeyed outside of a local church membership?

Hebrews 13:17

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Obey them? Which of the thousands of para-church ministry leaders am I to obey? Do I obey the Calvinists or the Charismatics?

Watch for my soul?

What para-church ministry watches for your soul? They will watch for your monthly donation; however, it is impossible for them to watch for your soul. To watch (v.17) is to “observe and guard in a protective way,” like a shepherd watches over his sheep.

My soul?

My soul is my *mind, will, and emotions*. The pastor is to consider what his church members are going through and be there to help them through it. This is impossible for the editor of a Christian Newspaper who lives in some other part of the world to do.

That he might give an account?

Actually, this verse does not say the pastor will give an account. It says “give account.” While there is no doubt that those of us who are pastors will give an account concerning how we have taken care of God’s sheep, this verse is not referring to that account. The Greek word translated account in this verse is **logos**. It has been translated “word” 218 times.

Hebrews 4:12

*“For the word (**logos**) of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

This verse is saying that the pastor must give the logos, (**the Word of God**) that would help the “soul” (mind, will and emotions) of the people he is attempting to help through some trying circumstances. “*They watch for your soul.*” This, of course, is impossible for someone in a para-church organization who knows or cares nothing about you and what you are going through.

Para-church Leader And A Funeral?

I had a man attend our church for several years; however, he refused to join. He told me that he could not support our church financially because he sent his money to a radio preacher. I told him to be sure and call that radio preacher when he needed someone to help him through some trying times or take the funeral service of someone in his family.

Hebrews 13:24

“*Salute* (a gesture made by a person when arriving and departing) *all them that have the rule over you.*”

This Scripture makes no sense outside of the local church context.

Question # 6

How can the following Scriptures be carried out without a local church membership?

Second Thessalonians 3:7

“*For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.*”

What para-church ministry leader is “among you.”? How do you know if he is behaving himself? I could write a book on that issue; however, I will not bother at this time.

Question # 7

Why does God mention “members” in the verses below if membership is not important?
(First Corinthians 12:25-27)

1. **Members** - “*care one for another*” (V.25).
2. **Members** - “*one member suffer, all the members suffer*” (V.25).
3. **Members** - “*one member be honoured, all the members rejoice*” (V.25).

4. Members - “and members in particular.” (V.27).

Notice the context is the local church (“in the church” v.28). The church is mentioned sixteen times in first Corinthians.

Other verses that make no sense outside of the context of the local church.

Acts 11:26, “*They assembled themselves with the church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Acts 11:23, “*They had ordained them elders in every church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church**

Acts 14:27, “*They...gathered the church together.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Acts 15:4, “*They were received of the church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Acts 15:22, “*Then pleased...the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Acts 20:17, “*Called the elders of the church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Acts 20:28, “*Take heed...to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Romans 16:23, “*The whole church, saluteth you.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

First Corinthians 14:17, “*I teach every where in every church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

First Corinthians 6:4, “*Set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

First Corinthians 11:18, “*When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

First Corinthians 14:23, “*If therefore the whole church be come together.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Philippians 4:15, “*No church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

Third John 1:10, “*Casteth them out of the church.*”

- **Impossible in a universal church.**

The word “churches” occurs another thirty-seven times in the New Testament. Obviously not referring to the so-called universal church unless those who promote this nonsense want us to believe there are more than one universal, invisible church.