

## **Lesson 5 - The Local Church's Relationship to Other Churches - Outline**

- I. Each particular and individual church is actually and *absolutely independent* in the exercise of all its churchly rights, privileges, and prerogatives; *independent of all other churches, individuals, and bodies of men whatever, and is under law to Christ only.***
  - A. The local church, by inheritance, is a pure democracy, complete in itself, *and therefore cannot join anything like or unlike itself.*
  - B. The only organization sanctioned in the New Testament is the local church. All other organizations are, at the least, extra-scriptural ("extra" - added to an existing or usual amount or number; additional).
  
- II. The New Testament **MAKES PLAIN** the independency and sovereignty of the local church.**
  - A. The local church always acted in absolute self-judgement of its own membership. Read 1 Corinthians 5:13.
  - B. The local church always acted in absolute self-election of its own officers. Read Acts 6:1-6.
  - C. The local church always administered its own ordinances. Read 1 Corinthians 11:13.
  - D. The local church always settled its own internal affairs. Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-5.
  - E. The local church always acted in absolute self-determination of its relationship with other churches. Read Acts 15:1-30.
  
- III. Unscriptural and man-made systems.**
  - A. Early in Christian history, the attempts to organize something greater than the local church began. This error resulted in many errors. Some examples:
    1. The Papal system – authority in one man.
    2. The Episcopal system – authority in bishops.
    3. The Presbyterian system – authority in a Session or an Assembly.
  - B. All these man-made systems have one thing in common – they rob the local church of its sovereignty and independence.
  
- IV. The New Testament teaches the voluntary cooperation of local churches.**
  - A. Each individual, local, and independent church can and should cooperate with other local churches in the Lord's work. This cooperation is to be done without any extra-scriptural organization.
  - B. There are many New Testament examples of cooperation between local churches:
    1. Cooperation in doctrine. Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 4:17; Eph 4:5
    2. Cooperation in discipline. 2 John 9-11
    3. Cooperation in missions. 2 Cor 11:9; Philippians 4:15
    4. Cooperation in member-exchange. Acts 18:27-28; 3 John 5-8
    5. Cooperation in sharing church-servants 2 Cor 8:18-19
  - C. Each church should be independent but not isolationist.

**Questions:**

- What is meant by the “independency” of a local church? [independency = freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others]
- What is meant by the “sovereignty” of a local church? [sovereignty = supreme power or authority]
- Why is it wrong for a local church to join any other organization?
- Give some New Testament examples of the local church's independency and sovereignty.
- Name some unscriptural, man-made organizations.
- What is meant by the voluntary cooperation of local churches?

**Assignment: Memorize Ephesians 3:20-21** *<sup>20</sup>Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, <sup>21</sup>unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

**About a local church - Read:** *1 Corinthians 12:12-31 <sup>12</sup>For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup>And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? <sup>18</sup>But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. <sup>19</sup>And if they were all one member, where were the body? <sup>20</sup>But now are they many members, yet but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup>Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup>For our comely [attractive] parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: <sup>25</sup>that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. <sup>26</sup>And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup>Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. <sup>28</sup>And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? <sup>30</sup>Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>**But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.***

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- A. The local church, by inheritance, is a pure democracy, complete in itself, *and therefore cannot join anything like or unlike itself.* If it did join anything else, it would then be in the larger group, be a representative democracy and not the pure democracy that God intended.  
[ What does a pure democracy require for success? A direct democracy is one where members vote on every issue themselves. See appendix.]
- B. The only organization sanctioned in the New Testament is the local church. All other organizations are, at the least, extra-scriptural ("extra" - added to an existing or usual amount or number; additional).
- II. The New Testament **MAKES PLAIN** the independency and sovereignty of the local church.
- A. **The local church always acted in absolute self-judgement of its own membership.**

Read 1 Corinthians 5:13. (from verse 9) <sup>9</sup> *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: <sup>10</sup>yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? <sup>13</sup>But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*

**B. The local church always acted in absolute self-election of its own officers.**

Read Acts 6:1-6. (about **The Appointment of Stephen**)

*<sup>1</sup>And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. <sup>2</sup>Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. <sup>4</sup>But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. <sup>5</sup>And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: <sup>6</sup>whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.*

**C. The local church always administered its own ordinances.**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:13. (about Christian Worship)

*<sup>1</sup>Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. <sup>2</sup>Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. <sup>3</sup>But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup>Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. <sup>5</sup>But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. <sup>6</sup>For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. <sup>7</sup>For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. <sup>8</sup>For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. <sup>9</sup>Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. <sup>10</sup>For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. <sup>11</sup>Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. <sup>12</sup>For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. <sup>13</sup>**Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?** <sup>14</sup>Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? <sup>15</sup>But if a*

woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. <sup>16</sup>But if any man seem to be **contentious**, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

[meaning of verse 16: Those eager to "be contentious" about this issue are flatly told "I don't do this, and neither do other churches," suggesting the matter is decided. Any Corinthian who disagrees should not try to change it.]

**D. The local church always settled its own internal affairs.**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-5. <sup>1</sup>Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? <sup>2</sup>Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? <sup>3</sup>Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? <sup>4</sup>If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. <sup>5</sup> I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? <sup>6</sup> **But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.**

**E. The local church always acted in absolute self-determination of its relationship with other churches.**

Read Acts 15:1-30. About the Council at Jerusalem.)

<sup>1</sup>And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. <sup>2</sup>When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. <sup>3</sup>And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

<sup>4</sup>And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. <sup>5</sup>But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

<sup>6</sup>And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. <sup>7</sup>And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know

how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. <sup>8</sup>And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; <sup>9</sup>and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup>**Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? <sup>11</sup>But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.**

<sup>12</sup>Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

#### Judgement of James

<sup>13</sup>And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: <sup>14</sup>Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. <sup>15</sup>And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written **(Amos 9:11),**

<sup>16</sup>After this I will return,

And will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down;

And I will build again the ruins thereof,

And I will set it up:

<sup>17</sup>That the residue of men might seek after the Lord,

And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,

Saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

<sup>18</sup>Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

<sup>19</sup>Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: <sup>20</sup>but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. <sup>21</sup>For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

#### Letter to the Churches

<sup>22</sup>Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: <sup>23</sup>and they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: <sup>24</sup>forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: <sup>25</sup>it seemed good

*unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup>men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup>We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. <sup>28</sup>For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; <sup>29</sup>that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

*<sup>30</sup>So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: <sup>31</sup>which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. <sup>32</sup>And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. <sup>33</sup>And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. <sup>34</sup>Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. <sup>35</sup>Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.*

### **Summary of Section II**

- A. **The local church always acted in absolute self-judgement of its own membership.**
- B. **The local church always acted in absolute self-election of its own officers.**
- C. **The local church always administered its own ordinances.**
- D. **The local church always settled its own internal affairs.**
- E. **The local church always acted in absolute self-determination of its relationship with other churches.**



**III. Unscriptural and man-made systems.****A. Early in Christian history, the attempts to organize something greater than the local church began. This error resulted in many errors. Some examples:****1. The Papal system – authority in one man.**

Papal supremacy is the doctrine of the Catholic Church that the Pope, by reason of his office as **Vicar of Christ**, the visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful, and as pastor of the entire Catholic Church, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered:<sup>[1]</sup> that, in brief, "the Pope enjoys, by divine institution, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls."<sup>[2]</sup>

Footnotes: 1 - [Paragraph 882](#) of the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (1997). 2 -[Paragraph 937](#) of the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) (1997).

**2. The Episcopal system – authority in bishops.**

An episcopal polity is a hierarchical form of church governance ("ecclesiastical polity") in which the chief local authorities are called bishops. [polity - a form or process of civil government or constitution.]

Specifically: The Episcopal Church is governed by a bicameral General Convention, which meets every three years, and by an Executive Council during interim years. The General Convention consists of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

**3. The Presbyterian system – authority in a Session or an Assembly.**

Presbyterianism uses a conciliar method of church government (that is, leadership by the group or council). Thus, the ministers and "elders" govern together as a group, and at all times the office is for the service of the congregation, to pray for them and to encourage them in the faith.

**B. All these man-made systems have one thing in common – they rob the local church of its sovereignty and independence.**



**IV. The New Testament teaches the voluntary cooperation of local churches.**

- A. **Each individual, local, and independent church can and should cooperate with other local churches in the Lord's work.** This cooperation is to be done without any extra-scriptural organization.
- B. **There are many New Testament examples of cooperation between local churches:**
1. **Cooperation in doctrine.**
    - Acts 2:42 <sup>42</sup>*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
    - 1 Cor 4:17 <sup>17</sup>*For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.*
    - Eph 4:5 <sup>4</sup>*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*
  2. **Cooperation in discipline.** 2 John 9-11 <sup>9</sup>*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup>If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: <sup>11</sup>for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*
  3. **Cooperation in missions.**
    - 2 Cor 11:9 <sup>9</sup>*And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia*

*supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.*

- *Philippians 4:15 <sup>15</sup>Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*

4. **Cooperation in member-exchange.**

- *Acts 18:27-28 <sup>27</sup>And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: <sup>28</sup>for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.*
- *3 John 5-8 <sup>5</sup>Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; <sup>6</sup>which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: <sup>7</sup>because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.*

5. **Cooperation in sharing church-servants** *2 Cor 8:18-19 <sup>16</sup>But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. <sup>17</sup>For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. <sup>18</sup>And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; <sup>19</sup>and not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: <sup>20</sup>avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: <sup>21</sup>providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

C. **Each church should be independent but not isolationist.**

## The Local Church's Relationship to Other Churches

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### Questions:

- What is meant by the “independency” of a local church? [independency = freedom from the control, influence, support, aid, or the like, of others]
- What is meant by the “sovereignty” of a local church? [sovereignty = supreme power or authority]
- Why is it wrong for a local church to join any other organization?
- Give some New Testament examples of the local church's independency and sovereignty.
- Name some unscriptural, man-made organizations.
- What is meant by the voluntary cooperation of local churches?

**Assignment: Memorize Ephesians 3:20-21** *<sup>20</sup>Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, <sup>21</sup>unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

**About a local church - Read:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 *<sup>12</sup>For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup>And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? <sup>18</sup>But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. <sup>19</sup>And if they were all one member, where were the body? <sup>20</sup>But now are they many members, yet but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. <sup>22</sup>Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. <sup>24</sup>For our comely [attractive] parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: <sup>25</sup>that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. <sup>26</sup>And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup>Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. <sup>28</sup>And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? <sup>30</sup>Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>**But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.***

Appendix - <https://futureofworking.com/6-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-direct-democracy/>

List of the Advantages of a Direct (Pure) Democracy:

1. Every vote carries the same weight in a direct democracy.
2. Governments cannot hide information from the people.
3. There is more accountability in a direct democracy structure.
4. People are typically happier when they live in a direct democracy.
5. Any officials that work on behalf of the people can be recalled at any time.
6. More cooperation occurs under the structure of direct democracy. This advantage does an excellent job of reducing the influence of special interests or wealth-based lobbying in the government structure.
7. Direct democracy is an exceptionally cost-efficient form of governing.
8. Each person is responsible for taking actions that improve their quality of life.
9. Direct democracy alters the purpose of a vote.

List of the Disadvantages of a Direct Democracy:

1. The cost of a direct democracy must be taken into consideration.
2. The issues that are up for discussion are for local impacts.
3. There is still a threat of vote manipulation to consider with a direct democracy.

We must recognize the complexity of so many problems in today's society. This disadvantage leads to a remarkably high level of possible influence that minority groups may never be fully protected. **Tyranny of the Majority.**

4. Each voter must be fully informed of the matters that are up for a vote.

And, there are times when voters in the minority must swallow their pride if a vote doesn't go their way. It is the only way that a direct democracy continues to get word done. This disadvantage can eventually cause some people to give up because they feel like their voice is never heard.

5. There must be a high level of participation for direct democracy actions to be effective.

**[everyone involved!]**

6. Direct democracies don't have a way to make fast decisions.
7. The majority isn't obligated to protect the rights of the minority.
8. Most decisions in a direct democracy are based on self-interest.
9. There are questions of oversight that must be answered in a direct democracy.
10. High levels of instability are common in direct democracies.

When people vote emotionally instead of logically, then choices involve instant gratification more than long-term benefits. This disadvantage is one of the primary reasons why there are only a handful of existing direct democracy structures operating today.