



The Authority of the Scriptures  
in the Church

Lesson Book

Joseph Sullivan

## **Preface**

*These lessons deal with important themes of Bible authority. Please read these lessons in the order they are given. They are multi layered lessons. Each one complements the proceeding studies.*

*The principles that will be shared are not always taught in the churches. Despite how necessary they are in our Christian lives. These serious themes from the Bible will show how God wants us to heed the scriptures and respect their silence.*

*Some suggestions for studying the content of this lesson book. Have a student each in turn, read a small paragraph section. After reading that section have that student and adjacent students, look up the scriptures in the section, to read. Once the paragraph and scriptures have been read, the teacher should discuss the verses being read, in the paragraph. The teacher should also ask questions about what was read and discuss what was in the section.*

*You will notice that each lesson varies in length of content. If you cover a shorter lesson, then go onto the next lesson. Some lessons will take multiple classes to finish. Certain themes and scriptures will be reintroduced. This is done to better help cement such truths in the mind.*

*I want to give a special thanks to my father and mother, Bill and Jeanne Sullivan. They have been my north star. Their loyalty to God and His Word, has been an unchanging example, throughout the years.*

*May God bless you, as you grow in your studies.*

*Joseph Sullivan*

## **Church lesson book:**

### ***The Authority of the Scriptures in the Church***

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## The True church/Bible authority

How are we to worship God, to be pleasing to Him?

Does it matter if we follow God's teachings on church worship?

The Bible makes it clear that we must obey God to be pleasing to Him.

**Matthew 7:21** *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' 23"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."*

**Hebrews 5:9** *"And, once made perfect, he (Christ) became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."*

God commands we worship in a certain way. Should we not, thus listen to His Word, in matters of worship?

- **Christ/His truth: The authority of the church**

The Bible calls the church, Christ's spiritual body, (**Ephesians 1:22-23**).

We join His church, when we are saved in baptism, (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). When we join His church, we become members of His body for service, (**1 Corinthians 12:12;14-23/Romans 12:4-5**).

We must submit to Jesus' truth in the matters of the church, (such church matters as worship, giving, etc). We must do this for Christ has the headship/authority to govern the church.

**Ephesians 5:23** *"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."*

In the book of Revelation Christ's church is (figuratively) called a golden lampstand, (**Revelation 1:20**). We read we need to remain obedient to His truth, to remain His church (**Revelation 2:4-5**). Or the "lampstand" will be removed. If that is how it is with a Bible church, think how God views a religious group that has never followed the teachings of the Bible.

**One Faith:** In the following passage we will read that Christ has one church and that His church has one faith.

Paul tells the Ephesians in **Ephesians 4:4** *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

It’s important to know what the Bible term for “faith,” (or “the faith”) is. The term “the faith” or “faith” relates to the convictions/beliefs that come from the truth, (**1 Timothy 4:6**). When people are not obedient to the faith, (**Acts 6:7**) they have left the faith, (**1 Timothy 4:1**).

**As Buddhist have their “faith,” from their religious teachings. So, NT Christians have their “faith,” from the inspired Bible’s truth.**

In matters of such divine revelation of truth, we read that “the faith” has for all time been delivered/revealed, to the saints, (**Jude 3**).

We have all inspired scripture, for every good work God wants of us, (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). From such knowledge of Christ’s truth, we have everything we need for a spiritual life, (**2 Peter 1:3-4**). If His truth meets all our spiritual needs, we have no more need for more revelation.

## **In matters of revelation, the Bible says, we must submit to Christ.**

In worship we must do all that He has given us authority to do.

**Colossians 3:17** *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”*

The words *“whatever you do in word or deed, do all in His (authority) name,”* means nothing should be added, that Christ has not given us authority to do, in word or deed, in matters of the church/worship.

We are not to add to His Word. To say something is of Him, (**1 Peter 4:11**) when God has not given it in revelation is a lie. The Lord needs nothing added, His truth is perfect, (**Proverbs 30:5-6**).

- **Where do we get authority?**

As we have read, the Bible says we get authority through Christ's teaching. Jesus said to His Apostles that He has "all authority." He told them they are to teach what He has commanded them. Part of Christ's teaching to His Apostles were for them to baptize in His name, so others could be accepted as His disciples. This command was also for salvation, (**Mark 16:16**).

**Matthew 28:16** *"But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

His teachings must be followed if we are to be God disciples, (**John 8:31**). Such teachings equip us for His works of service, (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

We must know His truth, in order to know how we are supposed to conduct ourselves within His house. If a congregation is to be accepted as His, it must follow His truth.

**1 Timothy 3:15** *"but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."*

To have unity, we need to be in Christ. This was the Lord's prayer to the Father right before He died on the cross, (**John 17:20-21**). This was Jesus' wish for us.

Jesus is called the shepherd. If we are willing to be guided as His sheep, and listen to His voice, we will be counted as His, (**John 10:14-16**).

We do not need to listen to other voices from uninspired men, in matters of religion, (**John 10:5**). For there is one spiritual flock and one heavenly shepherd, Christ.

- **Inspired Men**

Christ said He had all authority, to His Apostles (**Matthew 28:17-20**). In this context of authority, He then commanded the Apostles to teach His words. To confirm these words of truth, these men were given the Spirit, (**Acts 1:4-5/Acts 1:8/Acts 2:1-4**) to perform miraculous signs and wonders, (**Mark 16:14-20**).

The Apostles were guided into “*all truth*” by the Spirit, (**John 14:26 /John 15:26/John 16:13**). Therefore, we should listen to what they taught and practiced.

This puts **Matthew 18:18** in context. If the Spirit was to guide the Apostles in truth, then what they bound and loosed would be under divine guidance.

We need to look to the inspired example these men showed. What the Apostles spiritually practiced is commanded of us to follow, (**1 Corinthians 11:1/Philippians 3:17/4:9**).

We need to note that all the words of Jesus’ came from the Father (**John 12:49**) and was also given by the Spirit. When One in the Godhead speaks, They all speak.

- **Religious Denominational Divisions**

Read the below passage. Notice in this passage the Bible says, God’s people must be united. United in what? Is it talking about being united in polities, football teams, etc.? No, of course not. They must be united in one mind and judgement. Not divided. In matters of truth. The word “Denomination” means division. How are we to be united as this passage says? By being spiritually enriched in speech and knowledge of God.

In such spiritual matters of truth, in what Christ gave us in His authority, we must agree.

The inspired Apostle writes in **1 Corinthians 14:4** *“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge...10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name (authority) of our*

*Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*”

How are people divided from the teachings of the Word of God? We cease to have unity with God’s truth, when we choose man’s uninspired teaching over Gods. Through the knowledge of God, we must be united together in the same mind and spiritual judgement.

We must avoid “brethren” who seek to divide us from the doctrine of Christ. We must study to know the Bibles truth, to avoided being deceived by their false teachings.

**Romans 16:17** *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”*

As we have read earlier, the Bible says there is one “faith,” (**Ephesians 4:5**). We are not to add man made teachings to God’s truth.

We should not add to the Bible, the uninspired teachings of men. God says people who do this are offering up vain worship. Such people have a wrong heart.

**Matthew 15:8** *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”*

This passage clearly states we need to eliminate uninspired creeds, books, rules, from uninspired men. When we follow such, we are following the wrong sources for religious authority.

In matters of religious teaching, we should only speak God's oracles. That means we should not advocate things the Bible is silent on. We should not be teaching things that add or subtract from His Word. We should only speak His oracles of truth, (**1 Peter 4:11**).

## What are the Bible teachings for worship?

- **We are to give in church**

We should do this, “upon the first day of the week,” **(1 Corinthians 16:2)**.

How do we add to this command? We give on another day. How do we subtract from this command? We don't give at all.

We are not to give grudgingly, but as we have purposed, **(2 Corinthians 9:6-7)**.

The New Testament does not say to give a specific sum.

We are to use church funds as the Bible teaches. If we add/subtract from what the Bible says, we are changing His pure Word. We should not ignore God's preferences, for our own. That's what Paul warned about. Paul said people would distort (change) the truth to *make disciples after themselves*, **(Acts 20:27-30)**.

When a group of people divide from the truth to follow creeds, from uninspired men, they form a denomination.

### How the church is to use its funds

#### 1. The church is to preach the gospel

Christ commanded the Apostles to tell the world the gospel. Then told them to teach others what He had commanded them, **(Matthew 28:19-20)**. The church did this, by devoting themselves to the Apostles teachings, **(Acts 2:42)**.

Should preachers be paid? Paul the inspired Apostle says, preachers should be paid to preach, **(1 Corinthians 9:14)**.

#### 2. The church is to help needy saints

In matters of benevolence the Bible says the church is to help Christians in need.

A church can help another congregation that has needy saints. Churches in Macedonia and Achaia helped the needy saints in Jerusalem, (**Romans 15:25-26**). The Christians in Jerusalem were hurting due to a severe famine, (**Acts 11:27-30**).

For a local church to help a saint, that person must truly be in need. A needy saint must first look to finding support from their family, before the saint's congregation can help, (**1 Timothy 5:3-10**). In matters of getting financial help, a person must first be financially accountable at the home, (**2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8**).

When it comes to helping people, who are not Christian, we can look to the teachings of the Bible in matters of individual/personal responsibility. Helping people is our duty that God expects of us as individuals, (**1 Timothy 6:18**). But we must make sure they are first willing to help themselves, (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**). We need to be part of the solution not part of the problem.

How can we add to God's Word in church financial matters? We add to the truth of God's Word, when we use His church money for things the Bible does not advocate? We add to His teachings, when we use church funds for secular events, like ice cream socials, date nights, paintball games, etc.

God's church/Kingdom is spiritual in nature, Christ said... in **John 18:36**, *"My kingdom is not of this world..."* His Kingdom is not about worldly, non-Bible based things, and it's not for secular recreation, entertainment. God is silent on such activities and aims. If He does not advocate such activity, then neither should we.

In any act of worship, we must only teach and practice what God says in His gospel. To add to His Word is to distort it. To teach something else than what the Bible says in religion, is to teach a false gospel.

As Paul warns in **Galatians 1:6** *"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from*

*heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

## **What are the Bible teachings for worship?**

- **We are to sing praise to God**

We read that God has commands us to sing in church worship, (**Colossians 3:15-17**). We read Christ alone has given us authority for worship and for activities related to His church.

**Colossians 3:15** *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body (body synonymous for church Ephesians 1:22-23); and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”*

In worship we are commanded to sing. God tells us to not add/subtract from His Word. If we subtract from this command by having a chorus, (where some people sing), then we change God's command. The command is for all of God's people to sing. If we remove people and add instruments to His command and have a jazz concert and no one sings, we sin again, for God command is for us to sing to Him.

If we add to His command to sing, through the use of instrumental music to our singing, we err, for God says about worship, *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus...”* Has Christ taught anywhere for us to use instruments?

No. He tells uninspired man to not add to His Words. To abide in the truth and not go beyond it. We are to worship within the confines of the lines God has marked out for us.

We are not to not go beyond His teachings, **(2 John 9)** *“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”*

## **The Old Law**

You may ask what about the Old Testament, they used instruments in worship? They also offered up animal sacrifices, did circumcisions, had ceremonial rites, abstained from certain foods, observed no work on the Sabbath, had religious New Moon festivals, etc. Do we do any of these things? No. People (many times) were put to death, when they did a deliberate sin, under the Old Testament Law, **(Numbers 15:30)**.

We thankfully are not under such a law or it's death penalties.

The Bible says Christ has delivered us from the Old Law/Covenant to His Law, (the Law of the Spirit). The Old Law was called the *“Law of sin and death,”* **(Romans 8:1-2)** for when people deliberately sinned, under that Law, it often meant being put to death.

But we are no longer under the Old Law. Christ put an end this law, **(Romans 10:4/Colossians 2:14-16)**.

See also **(Hebrews 8:7;13/Galatians 3:16;19)**.

The New Covenant is Christ's will/Testament. Established in His death, **(Hebrews 9:15-17)**. Would you like someone changing your desired testament/will after you died? Would you like someone changing what you put into it, by adding or subtracting from your will? Christ has established His covenant through the shedding of His blood for you, **(Matthew 26:28)**. Who are we to change His teachings?

Does that mean the Old Testament is irrelevant? No, we can still learn from its examples **(1 Corinthians 10:6-11)**. The Old Testament shows us Gods attitude towards what is right and wrong.

By reading the Old Testament, we see God does not like His Word being messed with. The Lord did not like it then and does not like it now. His attitude does not change, **(Hebrews 13:8)**. Through the Old Testament we can find prophetic truths about Christ, which can encourage us and strengthen our hope in Him, **(Romans 15:3-4)**.

Remember Nadab and Abihu. They were priests under the Old Law, who offered up unauthorized fire before the Lord, because it suited them. They

choose to go outside of God's authoritative framework to do what pleased them. The Lord said these men dishonored Him as unholy, for doing what He had not authorized in worship, (**Leviticus 10:1-3**).

But people will ask, "but if what I want in religion accomplishes a good thing. How can that be wrong?" But in whose eyes, yours, mine, or Gods? It's not a matter of what we think is right. What counts is what God says is right.

Just because we think we know what is best, does not make it Biblically correct, (**Proverbs 14:12**). Nor is such behavior spiritually pleasing to God. If God had wanted it done, don't you think He would have mentioned it?

When we follow Christ, we are His disciples (**John 8:31-32**). When we follow uninspired men, who distort the truth, (**Acts 20:29-30**) by adding or subtracting from God's teachings, we are their disciples.

When you add or subtract ingredients from your grandma's recipe, it's no longer, your grandma's recipe, it's something else.

When you change a dead man's will, by adding what you would rather have in that will, ignoring that man's wishes, you distort his will into something that man did not want done. In our previous reading, we saw Christ's New Convent/Testament, is His will for us.

### **Attending church**

When it comes to worship, we are commanded to attend when the saints meet, (**Hebrews 10:24-26**). We are to make this our first priority, (**Matthew 6:33**).

When we meet to worship, it needs to be in the right (attitude) spirit. We need to worship in His truth, (**John 4:23-24**).

## Prayer and Bible study

When we worship, God tells us we are to talk to God in prayer and listen to Him through His Word. When we have church Bible class and hear Bible based sermons, we do as God wants, (**Acts 2:42**).

## What are the Bible teachings for worship?

### The Bible says we are to observe the Lord's Supper

Why do we observe the Lord's Supper?

#### Reasons below...

Christ observed the Lord's Supper. He did this as an example for His followers. We are commanded to remember Him.

**Mark 14:22** *"While they were eating, He took some bread, (Which was Passover bread **Mark 14:1;12-22**. Note: Passover bread was unleavened bread **Exodus 12:15**) and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body." 23 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine, (which was grape juice, commonly used in Jewish times for drinking) until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*

Leaven in the Bible spiritually represents sin, (**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**). In doing this Supper we remember Christ as our Passover lamb. This lamb took away the sins of the World, through His sacrifice, (**John 1:29**).

We are supposed to follow His spiritual example and Jesus did the Supper. **1 John 2:6** *"the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."*

Jesus said the Lord's Supper was necessary for eternal life. We need to eat and drink what spiritually (symbolically) represents Him.

**John 6:53** *"So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."*

*55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”*

We are to practice the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of His death on the cross. (*How do we remember Jesus? We think about His sufferings, His crucifixion, His resurrection*).

**1 Corinthians 11:23** *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”*

*25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”*

The term in **(Mark 14:22, Matthew 26:26, Luke 22:19)**, of “*breaking bread*” is used of the church when they met to remember Christ. The Lord commanded us to “*do this in remembrance of me...*”

Jesus took bread and broke it.

**Mark 14:22** *“While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He “broke it” ...*

**The assembled disciples got together and broke bread.**

**Acts 20:7** *“On the first day of the week we came together to “break bread.” Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.”*

**Acts 2:42** *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the “breaking of bread” and to prayer.”*

We need to note this act was not a common meal, **(1 Corinthians 11:20-22;33-34)**. This action was a memorial practice to remember Christ, not to fill the belly.

The disciples did the Lord's Supper on each first day of the week. When God establishes a day for remembrance, then on that day, it should be remembered.

God's commands are absolute. When God says don't kill or commit adultery, it is an absolute command. We are to observe these commands all the time. Not just occasionally. The Lord's Supper is the same.

Though we are not under the Old Law today, (**Gal 3:16;19/Col 2:14-17**), we can see examples from the Old Testament. The Jews observed each and every Sabbath, because God said, "*observe the Sabbath*," (**Exodus 20:8**).

God did not say "observe each and every Sabbath." Yet if the Jews (under the Old Law) neglected this absolute command they died. If they decided to skip a Sabbath, God put them to death, (**Exodus 31:15**). Same with the Feast of weeks, it was to be observed every 7 years, not just on the 7 years, when the Jews felt like observing this festival, (**Leviticus 25:4**).

Changing worship: How do we add to the command to remember Christ in the Lord's Supper? We can add to this command when we add root beer to the Lord's Supper or pizza. How do we subtract from the command to remember Christ in the Lord's Supper? We subtract from this commanded, when the Bible elements, (unleavened bread/fruit of the vine) for the Lord's Supper are removed.

We are not to change the instructions God has given us. It's presumptuous, arrogant, and vain to worship God any other way, then the way HE WANTS TO BE HONORED, (worshipped).

Worship is about God, not us. Church worship is an event about Him.

## Here a good story illustration:

*A young boy named Dave, had a Birthday party the following day. Dave told his mom he wanted chocolate cake and no veggies. Dave's mom, Jane, knew that chocolate cake was Dave's favorite cake and that her son hated vegetables.*

*On the day before the party, Dave also asked his mom, to not invite any clowns. Dave said to his mom, that he was afraid of them.*

*When the mother heard his wishes, she went out and got for the party, strawberry cake, a clown and a salad. Jane got these things because she wanted them.*

*Since the party was for Dave, was this appropriate? Did Jane's actions honor her son's Birthday wishes?*

Like Dave, God also has a special event. The Lord's special event is each Sunday. We gather to honor God in worship, by doing what He wants us to do from His Word. Church is not about pleasing our own self interests. Church is about Jesus and doing what He wants from the truth.

If the church belongs to Christ, (**Ephesians 1:22-23**) and was founded by Christ, (**Matthew 16:18-19**), then it should be viewed as His. In the Bible, we read of descriptive terms for the Lord's church.

The church is given such terms in the Bible, as the church of Christ, (**Romans 16:16**), and the church of God, (**Acts 20:28**). Note these are not titles, but descriptions of what the church is. The church belongs to Christ/God and thus should be termed as such. Why name Christ's church after some other person, if the church belongs to Jesus? He is the one who purchased the church through His death, (**Acts 20:28**). Find a church that is described as belonging to Christ. Find a church that submits to Christ's truth.

## **The Bible says we can learn from OT examples: 1 Cor 10:1-13/Rom 15:4**

Such examples (reflect God's attitude towards going beyond His will).

We can learn from the examples of Cain and Abel. God wanted a certain offering for worship. One followed God, one did not.

**Genesis 4:2** *“Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. 8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”*

Why was Cain not accepted? Because Abel did what God wanted, Cain did what he wanted for worship in his offering. God told Cain he would have been accepted if he had worshiped right.

When we worship God in a different way, then the way God commands, it is not accepted. In fact, it is considered evil.

**1 John 3:12** *“Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous.”*

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Another Bible example: is of Nadab and Abihu. They worshiped God the way they wanted instead of the way God had commanded. They were punished for their sins. When we offer up worship God has not authorized, we treat our Lord as unholy and with disrespect.

**Leviticus 10:1** *“Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Moses then said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord spoke of when he said:“ ‘Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.’” Aaron remained silent.”*

## Eldership and Deacons

The local church is guided in the truth by older men, who are called “Elders.” These men are given the name Bishop or Overseer. These names come from the same Greek word episkopos. This Greek word means to oversee.

The term Overseer and Bishop are interchangeable in the Bible. If you read **(1 Timothy 3:2/1 Peter 2:25)** using the King James version, the passages will say, “Bishop.” If you read these passages using the New American Standard version, the passages will use the term “Overseer.”

In **(Acts 20:17;28-30)** you will read the Elders are called, Bishops/Overseers. In this passage of Acts, the Elders are also called (poimén) “Shepherds.” Since a Shephard oversees the flock, such descriptions connect well with one another.

Elders are also called Pastors, **(Ephesians 4:11)**. This is a Latin word that has stayed in our Bibles from earlier translations. This Latin word (parochus) in English means Shephard.

The Bible does not lump the role of a Preacher (Evangelist) with a Pastor. Notice in **Ephesians 4:11**, they are distinct from each other.

As **Acts 20** says, the local church is under the oversight of the Elders of that church, who are to spiritually feed God’s church people, **(Acts 20:28-32)**. This means the Elders work at a local church. Their relationship role is autonomous/singular to the church. Elders are supposed to guide their own local congregation, **(1 Peter 5:1-4)**.

Elders are to defend against false teaching. They must oppose those who distort the truth. These men are to support the truth. They are to guide the sheep in the great Shepherd’s words.

Notice there is no other leadership governing in the church, (Popes, Priests, Universal Council, etc). The Bible is silent on this. The Bible says the Elders have a role in guiding their local church in the truth.

We should submit to those over us in the flock, **(Hebrews 13:17)**. Such men are to be honored, **(1 Timothy 5:1)**.

We should not add what God has left silent in the matters of His church and worship. **Colossians 3:17** *“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”*

The standards for being an Elder are recorded in the Bible. Elders must meet certain qualifications to be appointed, **(1 Timothy 3:1-7/Titus 1:6-9)**. It’s important that men meet such qualifications to be accepted in this leadership. Notice in the book of Titus, an Elder is also called an “Overseer/Bishop.”

Deacons are often associated with Elders. Deacons are helpers of the Eldership in matters of church work. They too must be appointed, **(Acts 6:1-5)**. They too must have qualifications, **(1 Timothy 3:8-12)**.

## Is it Scriptural to meet in a church building?

### How are we to use the church funds?

First question: Is it Scriptural to attend worship God in a “church building?”

To answer this question, we need to look at what the Bible says: There are two types of commands in the Bible, general and specific.

Example: “*Go into all the World and preach the gospel,*” (**Matthew 28:16-20**) is a general command. Paul the Apostle used a boat, walked, other Jews may have taken camels, donkeys, the rich could have taken horses, chariots, etc. Now days, we can take an airplane, a taxi, a bike, a train, etc. Or even use Facebook, blogs, media, Twitter, TV, Radio, pay for evangelists, (as they did also back then **1 Corinthians 9:11-14,**) etc., to share the Word of God.

Now if this was a specific command, like go into all the world and preach the Gospel on a donkey, then we would be obligated to go into all the world riding a donkey.

You see the difference?

Okay now to the main topic. We are commanded to meet and to not neglect coming together when we do. We are given a general command to meet together. The command does not specify the place of meeting. (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

The Apostles/Christians met in different places, they met in the Temple in Jerusalem, (**Acts 2:46; 5:12**) in homes, (**Acts 2:46**) etc. Under Nero's persecution they meet in the catacombs (underground tombs). The NT saints back then followed the general command in meeting. They met to worship in the places they choose.

Now it would be different if the Bible said a specific command instead of a general command, a specific command would be one of the following, "meet in a synagogue," or "in the Jerusalem Temple," or "by a river." See the difference?

So, in following the Bible command to assemble, we meet. Most people in this US Country meet in a building owned by the congregation.

Meeting in such a place is a reliable and convenient way to reach the unsaved world (which is also commanded, - **Matthew 28:16-20**) who may be looking for a local church. Meeting in a church building also helps in following the Bible command to assemble. As it makes meeting easier for Christians who may be meeting in numbers. A small house would not work for large numbers. A church building helps make the place a more established location, for finding the place of worship, (for visiting saints/non-Christians). Such a meeting place also, making it easy to access, etc.

Meeting to worship as a church, (instead) by the river could be bad for the elderly in July weather, meeting in tombs, (say with tongue and cheek) can be distracting, meeting in homes, overcrowding, so as to hinder people from assembling. Nor would a house be as easy to find, for those who don't see

a church sign/a building, or have their home listed online as a place of worship, etc. So, such a place would be less advantages in reaching those who are lost or those searching Christians who are saved. And seeking for a place to worship in the Temple in Israel would be inconvenient, etc.

**We are commanded to share Jesus with the lost and teach the saved.**

**Matthew 28:16** *“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,** baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

When we meet in a local building, we perform both commands. We can better reach the lost and teach the saved.

When we are given a general commanded to do something, like *“go into all the world and preach,”* we can choose **how to do it**. YouTube, internet radio, paid preachers, Gospel Meeting, Bible flyers, Facebook posts, church signs, online ads, church building, etc.

When we are given a general command to do something, like “meet,” we can do likewise. We can meet that command spiritually with funds, people, resources, etc., to support and uphold that command.

The church is not a local tag word, “park,” “house,” “temple,” it’s the following...

**1 Timothy 3:15** *“but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”*

What makes a church, a church, is if they are supporting the truth, in the ways that Bible teaches and are acting like a family towards God and each other, in upholding that truth.

This answers the second question: on How are we to use the church funds. But let’s explore this a little further.

### **What does the Bible teach on giving?**

The truth says Christ is the head/authority of the church, and the church is His body, (**Colossians 1:18**) we as members of that body (the church) are expected to give funds, (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**), and when we do so, generously/cheerfully, (**2 Corinthians 9:7**) especially those gifted, (**Romans 12:3-8**) to “the support of the truth.” If Christ is the head and His truth is to be followed, then we as His members of the church need to give to support its commands and teachings. Bibles, church meeting place, Gospel meeting flyers, power-point, places to sit, air conditioning, bathrooms, all help with people being able to hear the truth. If someone passes out from the heat, (do to no AC/water) or collapses do to standing for hours, (no pews) or is not able to go to a place to worship, because they don’t want to be stuck needing to do nature’s call with nowhere to go, (bathrooms), then these issues are all deterrents to hearing the truth.

The Bible gives us aides to better help us meet His commands. Aides that help us in obeying the truth, (that of assembling, worshiping, hearing the Word, etc).

Giving to God's church assembly, helps us meet the Bible's commandments, (to assemble, worship, teach, sing, etc). How the funds are to be used (correctly) is under the oversight of the church Elders, who are to spiritually feed God's church, (**Acts 20:28-32**). As the Bible has only given church autonomous relationships as a pattern, each Elder is to only support their own flock, (**1 Peter 5:2**).

## Aides and Additions:

*Below I will be very concise in matters of Bible authority. I'll detail the difference between two specific elements in the Bible.*

*An aide is something that meets a Bible command. An addition is something that goes beyond/adds to or subtracts from a Bible command.*

The church should strive to use its money and resources to meet the commands in the Bible. We should strive to respect the silence of the scriptures. (**2 John 9/Matthew 15:8-9**).

Below are common sense examples that highlight the difference between aides and additions.

- *Example: Having songbooks is an aide to meet the New Testament command to have all the saints sing. Having a small group chorus, a heavy metal rock concert, playing a jazz piano is an addition, it changes the audio command into something else.*

- *Example: Elders and Deacons having chairs and paper/pins to do their church work is an aide. Having Elders and Deacons instituting non-Bible based religious creeds, (as doctrine) is an addition.*
- *Example: A church having a baptistery is an aide in following the NT command to baptize. Having a gym in the church building is an addition.*
- *Example: Having Elders and Deacons are an aide in Bible based church governing. Having new religious positions, (Pope, Cardinal, etc). in matters the Bible is silent on are additions.*
- *Example: The preacher having PowerPoint to convey Bible subjects is an aide. A preacher having in worship breaks (during his sermon) secular sumo tournament matches is an addition.*
- *Example: The church is commanded to help needy saints, (even in this they must meet certain qualifications). This is an aide. The church is not commanded to do benevolence for non-Christians. This is a Bible based work of an individual. Using church funds for what the Bible is silent on and turning churches into charity organizations are additions.*
- *Example: Having Lord's Supper trays and cups are an aide in doing the Lord's Supper. Having pizza and cake in church are an addition.*
- *Example: Having Bibles for Bible study in worship, is an aide. Having churches use its funds for secular magazines, (Home and Garden, Bridal Magazine, Muscle Magazine, etc.) are additions.*
- *Example: Having a church building, helps meet the NT command to meet to worship. Using church funds to follow God's command to assemble is an aide and is warranted.*

*However, using God's money or His funded resources, (like a church building), for non-Bible based commands is an addition. Using the church for secular events, like a teen dance, dating social, food festival, etc. Is an addition. **We are to use church funded resources as the Bible directs.***

**For more Bible based examples and for further explanation see this link - <https://www.timberlandchurch.org/articles/establishing-bible-authority/>**

<b>GENERIC (Command)</b>	<b>AIDS (To meet that command)</b>	<b>SPECIFIC (Command)</b>	<b>ADDITIONS (That Change the command)</b>
<b>1. Build Ark</b>	<b>Tools Necessary To Prepare Wood</b>	<b>"Gopher Wood" Gen. 6:14</b>	<b>Oak, Spruce, Gum, Pine (Another kind of wood)</b>
<b>2 Lord's Supper</b>	<b>Hour of the Day</b>	<b>"First Day" Acts 20:7</b>	<b>Monday, Thursday (Another Day of Week)</b>
	<b>Containers</b>	<b>"Unleavened Bread" "Fruit of the Vine" Luke 22:1,18</b>	<b>Cookies, Coke (Other Kind of Emblems)</b>
	<b>Place — Building Lights, Pews, Heat</b>	<b>"Do This In Remembrance" Lk. 22:1,18</b>	<b>Making A Feast I Cor. 11:20-34 (Another Purpose)</b>
<b>3. Baptism</b>	<b>Baptistery, Pool, River</b>	<b>Immersion; "Buried" Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12</b>	<b>Sprinkling, Pouring (Another Kind of Action)</b>
<b>4. Make Melody</b>	<b>Song Books, Lights</b>	<b>"Sing" — Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16</b>	<b>Playing An Instrument (Another Kind of Music)</b>
<b>5. Elders</b>	<b>Local Business Meetings</b>	<b>"Feed Flock Among You " I Pet. 5:2-3 "In Every Church" Acts 14:23</b>	<b>Councils, Conventions Sponsoring Churches (Another Kind of Organizational Arrangement)</b>

## Institutionalism: The Red Line of Bible Authority

Institutionalism is basically a view used to justify certain behavioral practices inside of churches. Churches practice this behavior due to their “good intentions” and the desired effects they want to produce.

Institutionalism: is a **group of churches** forming a work or creating a governing institution, like orphan’s homes, hospitals, colleges, etc. with church funds.

Many “non-denominational,” “denominational” and “religious bodies,” practice this, despite God being silent on the subject of churches going beyond church autonomy. We will read how the Bible says each church is supposed to be self-governed and run, in submission to Christ and His Word.

If you follow man-made rules, personal wants and good intentions, then such action has you adding things to God's Word or subtracting from His Word.

Such behavior is vain...and worthless in God's sight. If the Bible does not say do instrumental music, or have a priest, use a Pope or create an institution or pool funds for stuff the Bible has not authorized, then those who do such activities, are actively distorting God’s Gospel for rules of men.

**Matthew 15:9** *“They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely HUMAN RULES.”*

If a church creates an institution with the Lord’s funds, then that church is doing something that the Bible has not given authority to do. We must abide in the Apostles example, **(Philippians 3:17/Philippians 4:9)** or follow a Bible based command in order to do something.

If a church is disobeying God's command, by not doing ALL things in His Name or authority, it is wrong. We must follow Christ. He has all authority, **(Matthew 28:18)**.

We must only follow what Christ has given from His Word. **Colossians 3:17** *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, **do it all in the name (authority) of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

We are commanded to walk IN the truth, not outside of its bounds. When we go outside of it (the parameters of truth), we are doing something else. **2 John 4** *“It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking IN the truth, just as the Father commanded us.”* (See also verse **9** for further context on this teaching/truth).

If you drew a circle around yourself and walked outside of that circle, you'd no longer be in the circle, right? If Christ has told us to abide IN His truth and not go outside the teachings of the truth, and we do, have we not done the same thing?

**The Bible further explains this concept.**

**Proverbs 30:5** *“Every word of God is **flawless**; 6 Do not **add** to His words... Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”*

We must not add to what God has taught. The inspired Word is flawless, it needs no additions.

If we do what man wants, instead of what God wants, does it please Him? No, it does not. God's commandments are His wishes. We should respect them. In order to be loved (accepted) of God and to love God, we should listen to Him.

**John 14:23** *“Jesus replied, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”*

We are commanded to obey His Gospel, for in Judgement...there will be... **2 Thessalonians 1:8** *“retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.”*

And any other creed, teaching, other than the Bible, is not the "gospel" God wants preached or followed. The Bible is the only gospel we should heed.

**Galatians 1:6** *“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different gospel**; 7 which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to **DISTORT the gospel of Christ.**”*

*8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, **should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!**"*

See also the following verses, on the seriousness of distorting the truth, **(Acts 20:29-30)**. When a person adds or subtracts from God's teaching, they change the truth, in this they distort it.

Remember Nadab and Abihu. They were priests under the Old Law, who offered up unauthorized fire before the Lord, because it suited them. God did not say they could not, but instead gave them details of what they could and should do. They choose to go outside of the bounds of what He had asked. God said this dishonored Him as unholy, **(Leviticus 10:1-3)**.

But people will ask, well doing this does good. In whose eyes, yours, mine, or Gods? Any time we break His commandments that God has given, by changing (distorting) the Gospel to fit us, or in making a secular teaching binding as a creed, for a church to practice, we erode the framework/the foundations of Bible authority. In this we sin. In this, we give the devil a handhold to work on us and His church a little more, to slowly let more (unauthorized) things be added.

Remember in King Saul's day, he thought the "greater good" was offering a sacrifice to preserve his army for war, when people were deserting, yet God said otherwise. That obedience was more important, **(1 Samuel 13:5-14)**. This was a continual flaw with the Israelite's in the OT. They continued to do what they thought was right in their own eyes, **(Judges 17:6/Judges 21:25)**.

Just because we think we know best does not make it Bible correct, nor spiritually pleasing to God. If God had wanted it done, don't you think He would have had commands and Bible examples for us to do it? **(Proverbs 14:12)**.

### **More details on giving/church work:**

What the Bible teaches:

In matters of benevolence to hurting saints', a church can help needy saints, at another church **(2 Corinthians 9:1-6; Romans 15:25-28)**. These verses in context are talking about a famine in Jerusalem. This famine was hurting the saints at the church there, **(Acts 11:27-30)**.

**Must meet certain standards:** But the Bible says in this regard, that such Christians must truly be in need and must first look to having support from their family, before even a local congregation can help, **(1 Timothy 5:3-10)**.

God makes it clear that accountability first must start at the home, **(2 Thessalonians 3:10/1 Timothy 5:8)**.

Giving to church members is important. But nowhere in the Bible, do we read of a group of people making a man-made organization, to handle funds as they see fit. Nowhere do we read of churches pooling funds for projects and programs, in recreational activities or even for religious goals.

Even in matters of helping needy saints, (from another church) no organizations or governing oversight was used. The Bible says when a church gave to help needy saints from another congregation, someone took the funds from one church to another, **(1 Corinthians 16:1-4)**.

Even from one church a person was sent, to help a Preacher in need, **(Philippians 4:18)**. The Bible's inspired example shows, it was one church sharing funds via a person or persons, **(1 Corinthians 16:1-4)** to members from another church or to a person. Nowhere do we read of organizations or of churches pooling funds.

When it comes to helping people in the world, like orphans, the poor, the hurting, we can look to the Biblical commands of individual/personal responsibility. We can help Christians and non-Christians that is our duty God expects of us. When it comes to meeting the needs of the world, these are things that we can do as individuals, **(1 Timothy 6:18)**.

**Arguments people make to say a church can use its funds for non-Christian benevolence, (even though clearly the Bible is silent on this topic).**

Certain people teach, saying these (below) passages are referring to church commands. When in fact for the honest reader, you will clearly see they are referring to the duties of individual Christians, (taming the tongue, being pure, serving others).

Read the following verses...

**Passage one: James 1:26** ***“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*** This is clearly talking to individual people to take hold of their tongue, to be pure and take care of others. For more context, see also verses **19-25**.

**Passage two: Galatians 6:10** says for us to do good to all men. Who is the us? Let's see, the context.

**Galatians 6:1** ***“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.***

***4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, 5 for each one should carry their own load. 6 Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. 7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.***

***8 Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”***

So, who is the “we,” in this context, in the “Therefore,” it is talking to individual brothers and sisters, in their personal responsibility, to live as God has commanded they should.

- In restoring someone in humility and in sowing to the Spirit, in doing good. This whole context above is talking **about individuals and their personal responsibility**. Nowhere in either of these passages, is the context of church implied, inferred or mentioned.

**Another argument** such teachers make is calling a Church organization and an individual person the same. They want to blur the lines, so as to further their views.

Of course, a church is not the same as a person:

Example: individuals like a man and woman have a role as husband and wife, (**Ephesians 5:21-33**). Fathers have a role in disciplining their children, (**Ephesians 6:4**).

Yet the organized church assembly (gathered saints as a whole) has a role in singing in worship, (**Colossians 3:15-16**), partaking in the Lord’s Supper, (**1 Corinthians 11:23-25**); Teaching/Prayer (**Acts 2:42-47**); Not forsaking Assembly (**Hebrews 10:24-26**), Giving, (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**).

**Another Argument:** People who want to use church money for organizations, multi church work, or even for certain secular resources they desire comes from **Matthew 28:16-20**. If you read the below passage you will see the Bible command to teach.

**Matthew:16** *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

From this command, such teachers say churches can create an organization pooled by church funds. They say such organizations can be

governed by a head church leader over other churches. They say the churches funds can be used for secular actives as well, gym, coffee shop, basketball court, pizza parties, socials, rock concerts, to “teach others.” The Bible Is silent on such matters.

One can teach the Gospel without such additions. They are not needed. Such actives serve as distractions not aides in teaching. They also undermine the Bible pattern of the autonomy of the churches.

They want to have churches paying for an organization to manage children orphan homes and hospitals. They say the passage on teaching, in **Matthew 28:19** is an expedient to these goals.

An expedient is God saying for us to do something, and we find the best way to carry out that commandment. And in **Matt 28:19** to “*go and make disciples of all nations,*” is a general command in Bible authority. In making disciples, we can choose how we “Go” to share the gospel, plane, email, Facebook, funds from church in evangelism, blogging, paying a Preacher, doing a Gospel Meeting, etc. But we cannot change the command itself.

Does it say “Go” and make disciple and teach...AND O by the way, make a hospital for sick people, and fund a church party, create a secular *organization outside of church autonomy*? No.

*If a certain activity (like creating an organization) undermines the scriptures in their teaching, (like respecting the autonomy of the church) it is not an expedient. It is not a Bible based aide; it is an addition.*

Yes, the result “may” I emphasis may, because such things are not likely to happen, but yes, it may cause someone to be curious about the religious group you are with, (if your hosting a church party, or have a gym, or have a charity organization) but that is after you add all these secondary applications to this specific command to Go, save, teach.

How we choose to carry out this command to teach and save is up to us, it is our choice. But it is talking about a specific thing, teaching the gospel. In following this Bible command, to teach, we cannot change other Bible related commands, (by changing church autonomy or adding a female Preacher, etc).

**Simple truth: Redundant as this is, it is true.** The command changes when you change the command and apply other things. Like Nursing homes for helping older people with housing, daycares for babies.

**Example:** We are commanded to sing, so if we sing, does it make it right to add instruments when we have no directive and are commanded to just do what the Bible says? We are commanded to seek qualified men as Elders and Deacons, does that mean, if we do so, we can also appoint a Pope, Archbishop, female Preacher, etc?

***Just because God has told us to do a thing, does not mean we can go past the thing He has commanded us to do, to do our own thing.***

An organization that changes the Bible pattern on church autonomy to suit a hierarchy (staff governmental) goal, is going beyond what is written, it is not speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where it is silent.

**Let's look at what the Bible teaches in apostolic authority, in what we are to follow in the Bible PATTERN.**

Notice in the passage below, that when Paul the Preacher was in need in the region of Thessalonica, the Philippian church did not send the funds to the Thessalonica church, then to Paul, but DIRECTLY to Paul, through a PERSON. And each time Paul mentioned his need, it was about the issue of a church sharing funds with him. It was supposed to go to Paul, the person, that was what was expected, it was not expected or mentioned that churches should be pooling their funds together, creating an organization, or moving or storing funds in different churches for Paul.

**Philippians 4:10** *"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter **of giving and receiving**, except you only;*

*16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, **you sent me aid more than once when I was in need**. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, **now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent**. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."*

Nowhere in the Bible does it say anything otherwise than the above. **Don't you think these churches (in that day and age) could have created organizations and pooled funds together? If God had wanted His inspired Apostles to do such, He would have made it happen.** Let us respect the pattern given us.

Besides the church at Philippi, the Macedonia church and the Achaia church also gave to an individual, Paul, to take funds to the needy saints in the church at Jerusalem church, (**Romans 15:25-29**). The Galatia church gave in the same way, as well, by sending out (Christian) individuals. (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**).

Only time churches helped another church, was through autonomous church actions. Churches did not work collectively, to create a bigger work, under some committee or mother church. Each local church as an autonomous body, sent money to Jerusalem to help needy saints in the Jerusalem church.

The church at Corinth also gave to Jerusalem, they gave to help the needy saints at the Jerusalem church. (Will mention the verses below, to answer their last argument that tries to say the church can use its funds for non-Christian member benevolence.)

### **Last argument I will detail:**

**The argument** goes as follows. The people who advocate the misuse of church funds point to **2 Corinthians 9:12-13**.

Argument to be made for churches helping non-Christians is in (**2 Corinthians 9:12-13**). They read verse **13** and see *ALL MEN*. And imply that this must mean, the church was giving to anyone and everyone. Not just the *all* the needy saints, at Jerusalem, (even though the context is written concerning these saints).

Let's read the context, starting with **2 Cor 8**, Paul urges their support to do what the Macedonia church did, which was to give to the Jerusalem church members. Please read with me, I will mark the places that we need to pay careful attention to.

**2 Corinthians 8:1** “Now, *brethren*, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which **has been given in the churches of Macedonia**, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, **they gave of their own accord**, 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the **support of the saints**...”

Finishing in chapter 9 of 2 Corinthians.

**2 Corinthians 9:1** “For it is superfluous for me to write to you **about this ministry to the saints**. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. 6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly... 12 **For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints**, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 13 Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of **your contribution to them and to all men**.”

So, this is obviously talking about saints in Jerusalem who are having their needs supplied. Which in context of the ministry in this chapter. These saints are thankful for such generosity and thus glorify God.

The words, “All men,” could mean other saints in that region who could also be helped as well, since again in this Bible passage/context IT IS TALKING ABOUT HELPING NEEDY SAINTS.

Nowhere in the Bible does it mention the churches were ever giving money to non-Christians. In all the verses I used above, and, in this article, you can see in the Bible scriptures that the Bible mentions church benevolence for saints, and saints only.

Nor does it mention in the chapter passages of, **2 Cor 8-9** non-Christian benevolence, not once, in these chapters, not once in any context, example or scripture, except (in the misused words), “all men.” Don’t you think it strange, that Paul waits till now to briefly say this word, when the rest of the context in these chapters and in the Bible is silent? Unless, it is accord with the rest of the context of these passages.

I don't quote scholars, but I like the scripture this reliable and knowledge preacher, Rodney Pitts uses, and the common-sense application he shows. I readily have agreed with what this man says, it's Bible based, and reflects what I have learned in my study. Thus, I mention his words and highlight his article to be looked at below.

“One might be quick to point out that the text says that they gave to "all men," but it must be remembered that the word "men" is italicized to show that it is not in the original text, and has been added by the translators.

Thus, the answer to the problem lies not in the addition of the word "men," but in the correct understanding of to whom the "all" refers.”

“In order to have a correct understanding of the word "all" in this verse, we need to first define it. All, or pantas in the Greek, is defined in two ways:

(1) Without the article it is "every, every kind or variety or whatever is mentioned or under consideration ",

(2) With the article it is "the whole of the one thing referred to, one object, with the noun it means 'all.' In the plural it signifies the totality of the things referred to" (all emphasis mine, rbp) (Vine's Expository Dictionary). Thus, the word does not mean "all men" or "all saints" or even "all sinners" for that matter; it is simply a word that means "all" of whatever is referred to in the context. This point is clearly seen in various verses.

In Galatians 2:14 Paul was said to have rebuked Peter before "'all." Are we to believe that Paul took Peter and rebuked him in front of sinners in the world, or just in front of "all" the saints present? This same idea is

seen in Paul's admonition to rebuke those that sin before "all" (1 Timothy 5:20).

Does the context allow us to believe that Paul was telling Timothy to rebuke erring Christians before saint and sinner alike? Surely from these verses we can see that the word all is limited by the context in which it is found.

And, as we shall soon see, the "all" of 2 Corinthians 9:13 is limited by its context as well."

Source article...

[www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume33/GOT033260.html](http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume33/GOT033260.html)

People who say we should just do what the Bible says, don't go outside of the Word, in worship, music, etc., but are willing to make an exception to going beyond the bounds of the Word, in this matter, are following the teachings of men and are not abiding in Christ's Bible pattern and authority. Certain of these teachers due make the arguments above. If done with wrong intent, it can lead people astray, (**2 Peter 3:16**).

## Is the Church and the Christian individual the same?

You may be asking why does this matter? Well, if an individual is the church and his/her daily life is part of the assembly, then that opens up venues for church worship inside the meeting house of the saints. It also limits what we can do outside of worship, if we as individuals are the church, since we, (as a church) are given a specific pattern of how to worship God. This is important, since we are to only abide in the Bible pattern.

In the context of church worship in singing, we (the church) are told to do everything, in His authority in matters of being members of His body, the church.

**Colossians 3:15** *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as **members of one body** you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 **And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**”*

But if we go outside of the assembly and are still, the church. Then the limitations of the church pattern would apply to daily life.

**Examples one:** In church a woman cannot teach a man in the assembly. If we are the church outside of the assembly, then woman cannot teach period, such people as the lost.

**In the context of assembling to pray/worship, 1 Timothy 2:2** says *“I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”*

But we see an individual woman outside of the worship setting can and did teach the lost.

**Acts 18:24** *“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. **When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.**”*

**Example two:** If we are the church, then we can't eat food period. Sounds stupid I know. But this logic would follow if the two themes are the same.

In regard to the Lord's Supper we are told to do that act of worship in the church and have meals for sustenance outside of the church. So as to not abuse the memorial service of the Lord.

For carnal needs, we are commanded to meet our appetites at home, not at church. Nowhere does the Bible teach having meals and partaking in social recreation, is to be a part of the church assembly. The verse clearly says homes are for meals and the church is for remembering Jesus in His death. Obviously, God wants a separation, so that abuses do not occur in worship.

**1 Corinthians 11:17** *“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.*

*19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and*

*another gets drunk. 22 **Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!***"

**Example three:** We are commanded to sing spiritual hymns to God in church. But if we as individuals outside of the assembly are able to listen to secular rock music, country and (according to certain doctrines) we are the church, then isn't it alright to do the same inside of the assembly? If we are the church can't we add to worship, what we do in our daily life?

You see what I am getting at. On the other spectrum, some people say we can't do certain things outside of the assembly because we can't do them inside the assembly, due to this same kind of thinking.

**Examples:** you can't listen to secular rock, because a church assembly can't. You can't as an individual go hunting and shoot guns, because that is not a thing to do in worship. You get the point. It is kind of silly. But such arguments need to be addressed, for they are being taught.

This misplaced idea, greatly limits what we can and can't do. For in matters of church assembly we are given a pattern. As mentioned earlier in **Col 3**. People who condemn other saints, for doing things outside of the church, (do to this perspective), open the door for people who say "they (as individuals) are the church" in daily life, to add to the assembly what they, ("the church") do in daily life. It goes both ways. Both views are unbiblical in nature.

**Let me break down what the church is in the Bible. I will use book, chapter and verse for every outlining point.**

- Christ said the kingdom of God is within you, **(Luke 17:21)**.
- The kingdom is the church. They are used synonymously, **(Matthew 16:17-19)**.
- The church was prophesied to come with power in the lifetime of the disciples who walked with Jesus, **(Mark 9:1)**.
- Christ told the Apostles to wait for that power, (Holy Spirit) in Jerusalem, **(Acts 1:4-8)**.
- The power (Holy Spirit) came in **(Acts 2:1-4)**.
- The church in that same (2nd) chapter of Acts is said to be established. When people were baptized, they were added to the church. In **Acts 2** in the context of worship, the Bible says in verse, 47 ***“They were Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the **church** daily such as should be saved.”*** KJV

The Greek word for church is **ekklésia** <http://biblehub.com/greek/1577.htm> and means to call “*out from and to*” something. In this case, from the context of saints in the Bible, it’s to call people out to assemble. See example: **Acts 14:27** ***“Upon arriving in Antioch, **they (a group) called the church together** and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too.”***

- *Church is a unit of gathered people.* Notice, 1 person was not the church, 2 people were not the church, 3 people were not the church, etc., the church in this chapter is the ***called out, assembly. The church is the body of believers.***

Another example of this truth, is in **Matthew 18:15** “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the **two of you**. If they listen to you, you have won them over.

16 But if they will not listen, **take one or two others along**, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’<sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, **tell it to the church**; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

- The church is the people coming together, as living stones. When they are together, they build God’s spiritual house.

**1 Peter 2:4** “As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, **like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house** to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

Note: that is what Jesus meant when He said the kingdom of God is within you, (**Luke 17:21**) We are the building blocks that build up the kingdom.

- The church is called His body, (**Colossians 1:24**). We are joined together with Christ, to form His one spiritual body, the church, when as members we unite, aka in assembly, to worship God.

**Read this passage. It further details this point: 1 Corinthians 12:12**

“The human body has many parts, but the **many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 27 All of you \*together are Christ’s body**, and each of you is a part of it. 28 Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church...”

**Romans 12:4** “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ **we, though many, form \*one body**, and each member belongs to all the others.”

- When the church came together, in the following chapter, who was it? It was the whole assembly.

**Acts 15:4** *“When they (a group) came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the **church** and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.<sup>12</sup> The **whole assembly** became silent as they listened...”*

I am not the body of Christ; I am a member. But when I unite with fellow believers of Christ's body, I join with them to assemble, as His church. I hope this helps. If we open the door one way, then, as mentioned above, it is applicable in the other direction too. I have heard this argument to further social justice works, in church functions, that are not Bible based. Let us pray about what we read and study carefully such matters.