

Spheres of Authority

The Authority and Responsibility of the Local Church

Selected Scriptures

1. The _____ of the Church

Jesus said that He would build His church upon the confession of faith that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:15-20). His church was to be so durable that even death could not defeat it. Jesus commissioned and used His apostles to make disciples to follow after Christ (cf. Matt 28:18-20), and this is how the church would be built (cf. Acts 5:11; 8:1, 3).

2. The _____ of the Church

Jesus has all authority over all things (cf. Matt 28:18). Therefore He is the ultimate authority for all things concerning the church (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph 4:15; 5:23). He has the authority to delegate the authority and responsibilities of the church as He desires. He has chosen to have only qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) serve as elders to lead and shepherd the churches (1 Pet. 5:1-4). These men are to exercise authority in the church only in the areas where it has been delegated, and the believers are to joyfully and willingly submit to them (cf. Heb. 13:17). The ministry of the local church is supplemented by other qualified men (1 Tim. 3:8-13) who are to serve as deacons who are to assist with necessary areas of church ministry so that the elders can focus on the vital areas of church ministry (cf. Acts 6:1ff). The local church body has an important role in the calling or sending of men for ministry (Acts 13:1-3) as well as a voice in other important actions within the congregation (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; cf. 1 Pet. 5:3).

3. The _____ of the Local Church

A. The _____

Jesus' ministry was centered around preaching and making disciples who knew and obeyed what He taught (Matt 7:24; Luke 8:21). Jesus' commission solidified that teaching was integral for making disciples (Matt 28:19-20), and the apostles prioritized preaching in their ministry (cf. Acts 6:2). Paul stresses the need to for the elders to faithfully teach, preach and publicly read the Word (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Titus 1:9).

B. The _____

The church of Jesus Christ is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), and Jesus gave to the church the ordinances of water baptism (John 3:22) and the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22ff). Water baptism is

an ordinance which Christ commanded the apostles to perform (Matt 28:19) and it served as one of the first acts of obedience of new believers as they were added to the church (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 18:8). Baptism is to be performed as a function of the local church by individuals who are recognized by the local church (Acts 8:5, 38-39; cf. Acts 6:5). The Lord's Supper was to be practiced by the local church when it is gathered together (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 22, 33).

C. The _____

The local church has the responsibility to watch over the spiritual health and living testimony of the members of the local church. Individual church members are to be diligent to hold one another accountable (Matt 18:15-20; cf. 1 Cor. 5:1ff) with the goal of repentance, restoration and reconciliation (Matt 18:15; Gal. 6:1). This even extends to disputes that may fall under the authority of the civil government which (1 Cor. 6:1ff).

D. The _____

The local church has a responsibility and a requirement to gather together (cf. Heb. 10:25). Israel was given a specific regulation for the frequency, activity, and mentality for a time dedicated to the Lord (Ex. 20:8-11). While there is no equivalent command given to the church, the pattern of the believer's dedication to meeting on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10) appears to be based after the pattern of the command given to Israel (cf. Acts 18:4). Until the advent of modern technology, it was impossible to fulfill any of the responsibilities of the local church without physically gathering together, and even with modern technology there are many that still cannot be fulfilled without physically gathering.

E. Care for _____

Some elders in the local church, particularly those who are tasked with the ministry of the Word, are to be taken care of by the people of the church. This is an obligation of the local church (1 Cor. 9:4ff). The members of the local church are to strive to make it easy for the elders to perform their duties (Heb. 13:17b), and this includes generosity in the care for the elders who labor in the ministry of the Word (1 Tim. 5:17).

F. Care for _____

The local church is also to be concerned with the physical well-being and needs of other Christians outside of their own community (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4). The local church is to prioritize their care for the wellbeing of believers, particularly the believing widows in the church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 5:1ff), before other individuals in the community (1 John 3:17; cf. James 2:15-17).