

Divine Authority

Lesson 8
Organization of The Church of
Christ

What We Have Learned In The Previous Lesson

The Lord's church is an assembly of individuals who are called out by the gospel to obedience to Christ
Universal church – all Christians in the world
Local church – Christians working and worshipping together in a given place

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What We Have Learned In The Previous Lesson

Misconceptions about the Lord's church
Building view
Catholic view
Protestant view
Institutional Church of Christ view

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What We Have Learned In The Previous Lesson

Differences Between Universal And Local church

Entry	Acceptance
Effect of death	Assembling
Necessity of joining	Collective Work
Origin	Oversight
Number	Treasury

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Introduction

- Comparing Roman Catholic organizational structure to New Testament, we see no resemblance
- No pope, no earthly world headquarters in Rome
- We see the same for denominations patterned after human traditions rather than the New Testament

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Introduction

- Also there are differences between how many churches of Christ are organized compared to the New Testament
- These organizational perversions are not easily detected because churches of Christ appear to be scripturally organized with elders and deacons
- However, elders in many local churches overstep their bounds supervising the work of other local churches

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Introduction

- Further, elders contribute local church funds to centralized organizations that oversee and conduct work for many local churches
- Root of confusion – believing universal church is a working organization composed of local churches under centralized leadership
- Also confusion because no distinction is made between individual and local church action

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Purposes of This Lesson

- Make distinctions between how the universal church and a local church are organized
- Clearly define a local church
- Understand differences between individual Christian and local church actions

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Organization of The Church of Christ

How is the universal church organized?
What is A local church?
How is A local church organized?
Differences between individual and local church action

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How Is The Universal Church Organized?

- Universal church has no earthly centralized organizational structure through which local churches may work as “one”
- Only organizational structure given is on the local level!

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How Is The Universal Church Organized?

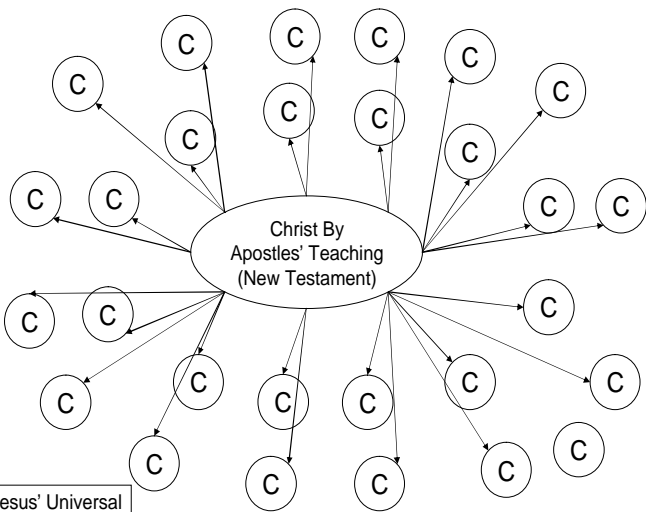
- No Divine authority for one church to oversee the work of another or to have a centralized treasury funded by other local churches to do work for them
- Therefore universal church has no earthly overseers or treasury

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How Is The Universal Church Organized?

- Only universal church organization on earth is Jesus as Head directing individual members of His body through the apostles' teaching
- As we obey Christ in all things, we are doing the work of His universal church

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Jesus Head of Universal Church

EPH 1:22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

EPH 1:23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Universal Church At Work

COL 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

COL 3:18 ¶ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Universal Church At Work

COL 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

COL 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

COL 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

Universal Church At Work

ACT 8:4 ¶ Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

GAL 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

GAL 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

How Is The Universal Church Organized?

- No Divine authority for universal or regional overseers to oversee universal or regional work
- No Divine authority for universal or regional treasury to fund universal or regional work
- Universal church works through individual Christian action

What Is A Local Church?

- A local church is a team of saints that agrees to work and worship together as the Lord directs
- We see examples of such local churches in the New Testament

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What Is A Local Church?

HEB 10:24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

HEB 10:25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

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What Is A Local Church?

1Co 1:1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

1Co 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

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What Is A Local Church?

PHI 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, ¶ To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

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How Is A Local Church Organized?

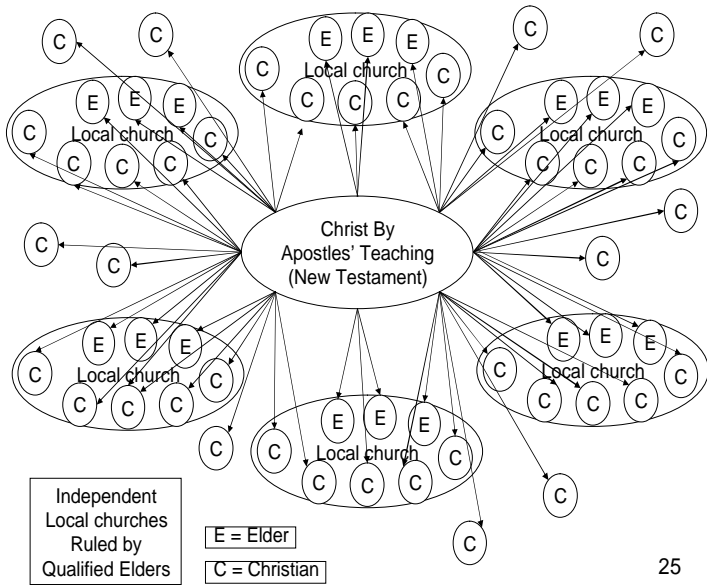
- Each local church should have qualified elders assisted by qualified deacons
- Whatever the New Testament says a local church must do should be followed without exception
- However, elders have freedom in matters of judgment to exercise their own wisdom
- For example – determination of time of worship, preachers to be supported, arrangement of bible classes and so on

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How Is A Local Church Organized?

- Local church is not an organization
- It is a team of saints who work and worship together as the Lord directs
- Our obligation to a local church grows out of our obligation to the Lord

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Each Local Church Should Have Elders And Deacons

ACT 14:23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

PHI 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, ¶ To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

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Qualifications of Elders

1TI 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

1TI 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

1TI 3:3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

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Qualifications of Elders

1TI 3:4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

1TI 3:5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

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Qualifications of Elders

1TI 3:6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

1TI 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

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Qualifications of Elders

TIT 1:5 ¶ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

TIT 1:6 namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

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Qualifications of Elders

TIT 1:7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,
TIT 1:8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

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Qualifications of Elders

TIT 1:9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.
TIT 1:10 ¶ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,

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Qualifications of Elders

TIT 1:11 who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

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Work of Elders

- Oversee work, worship and edification of a local church
- Guide the local church through their example and teaching the Word
- Feed the local church through teaching the Word, sermons and Bible classes
- Guard the local church against false teachers from without and errors from within

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Work of Elders

1PE 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,
1PE 5:2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

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Work of Elders

1PE 5:3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

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Work of Elders

ACT 20:28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

ACT 20:29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

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Work of Elders

ACT 20:30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

ACT 20:31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

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Work of Elders

ACT 20:32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

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Work of Elders

- Their oversight limited to local level
- Their oversight cannot be extended to regional or universal level

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How Is A Local Church Organized?

- Elders should be assisted by qualified deacons
- Deacons are "official" servants of the local church
- They assist in carrying out various tasks under the oversight of the elders

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Qualifications of Deacons

1TI 3:8 ¶ Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,

1TI 3:9 but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

1TI 3:10 These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach.

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Qualifications of Deacons

1TI 3:11 Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

1TI 3:12 Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.

1TI 3:13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

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An Example of The Work of Deacons

ACT 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

ACT 6:2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables."

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An Example of The Work of Deacons

ACT 6:3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

ACT 6:4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

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An Example of The Work of Deacons

ACT 6:5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

ACT 6:6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

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An Example of The Work of Deacons

ACT 6:7 ¶ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

- Individual Christians have far greater liberty to act in various areas than do local churches
- The local church cannot do anything the individual Christian can do
- Failing to recognize this difference has led many churches of Christ into denominational errors
- New Testament teaches there is a difference

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

MAT 18:15 ¶ "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

MAT 18:16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

MAT 18:17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

- Individual Christians should seek to restore the Christian who sins
- Then, if that fails, the local church should take action

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

1TI 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

- A local church is limited to caring for needy saints
- Individuals are to care for their own, including saints in their families
- When they cannot care for them, the local church can then act
- Local church not to take over individual obligations in benevolence or any other area

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

JAM 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

GAL 6:9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

GAL 6:10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

- Individual Christians have obligation to help non-Christians in need
- Local church has no such obligation to do this from its treasury

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

COL 3:17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

COL 3:18 ¶ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

COL 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

COL 3:20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

COL 3:21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.

COL 3:22 ¶ Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

- Individual Christians have family, economic and other responsibilities in life
- Local church has none of these
- If individual Christians want to start a business, college, hospital or home to help the needy of the world, they can do it
- Problem – no authority for local church to do these things from church treasury

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Individuals May Call Themselves Christians

Act 11:26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

1Pe 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

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Local Churches Called Christians Churches Forbidden

Rom 16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

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Individuals May Observe Special Days Privately

Rom 14:5 One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

Rom 14:6 He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

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Individuals May Observe Special Days Privately

Rom 14:22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

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Local Churches Forbidden Observing Special Days

Gal 4:10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Gal 4:11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

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Differences Between Individual And Local Church Action

If we allow these individual matters to be practiced as a local church activity, we open the door to a local church practicing anything that an individual Christian can do

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Areas of Work Forbidden To The Local Church

Civil and political
Commercial and economic
Secular education
Entertainment and recreation

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Civil And Political

JOH 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

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Civil And Political

JOH 18:37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

JOH 18:38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" ¶ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."

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Commercial And Economic

JOH 2:14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

JOH 2:15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

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Commercial And Economic

JOH 2:16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

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Secular Education

MAT 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

MAT 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

MAT 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." 71

Entertainment And Recreation

1CO 11:20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 1CO 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

1CO 11:22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. 72

Entertainment And Recreation

1Co 11:33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

1Co 11:34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

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Why Divisions Over How Church Spends Money?

- Before members of a local church contribute, they are free to use their own money as desired excluding sinful actions
- Once money is contributed by local church members, it is the Lord's money to be used only for the purposes that members believe are authorized
- Members can never share in things they believe are unauthorized

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Why Divisions Over How Church Spends Money?

ACT 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?"

ACT 5:4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

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Why Divisions Over How Church Spends Money?

2JO 1:9 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.

2JO 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;

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Why Divisions Over How Church Spends Money?

2JO 1:11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

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What We Have Learned In This Lesson

Universal church has no earthly centralized organization

A local church is a team of saints that agrees to work and worship together as the Lord directs

Each local church should be overseen by qualified elders assisted by qualified deacons

There are differences between individual and local church actions

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