

THE PRIMACY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Adding upon the concepts and principles presented in the article produced by Kent Shirley of Grand Valley Baptist Association, *When a church is really a "church"*, the thrust of this new article aims at a specific focus: **the Primacy (the premier super-importance) of the Local Church in God's Kingdom and In His Word.**

When Jesus said... *"I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it..."* in Matt. 16:18, He was speaking about His New Covenant people, world-wide, paid for by His spilt blood upon the cross at Calvary. In Acts 20:28-31, Paul mentions that the local church in Ephesus was a part of God's "global" church, and it was **bought** with His blood. We then read in Revelation, chapters 2 & 3, about **specific, distinct, local church families**... the word "**churches**" is used to describe them. In fact, almost all of the examples, teachings (doctrine) and principles found in the books of Acts through Jude... seem to relate to specific, distinct local church families. In the book of Galatians, it was written to the "churches" of Galatia (a region - Galatians 1:2). So, of course, you are probably asking, "how does this relate to me"? Yes, we are very "me" oriented, aren't we? If you are a genuine, born again, disciple of the Biblical Jesus Christ, then it has everything to do with you, specifically... and to the other believers in Christ who are a part of your specific, distinct, local church family.

- 1. From a biblical stand-point**, as a New Testament believer in Jesus Christ, the Messiah, Savior of the World... what specifically are you supposed to be a part of, regarding your walk with Christ, together with other believers? The **answer is: a specific, distinct, local church family**. There are no examples of any specific believer in Christ (*from Acts 2, onward*) that was a part (active member) of **more** than one local church family... except, maybe, those who were involved in missionary-church planting, such as Paul the apostle. Yet, even with Paul, one may conclude that the church in **Antioch** became his local church family, since they sent him out (along with Barnabas) in Acts 13 and he and Barnabas reported back to them (see Acts 14:26-28).
- 2. From the Biblical Record**... each local church family was independent and not under any outside "church council" of any sort. All of the churches seen in the book of Acts and throughout the books of Romans through Titus some times, in some cases, seemed to **cooperate**, somewhat, **voluntarily**, and in most cases, in a **temporary** fashion, with each other, but none were ever under anyone else's leadership. Temporary, voluntary collaboration and cooperation is seen, **once in a while**. Thus, each local church family maintained their independence, although one may conclude it was more **interdependence** than independence, because, really, no local church family was completely isolated from each other's love, concern and prayer.
- 3. From the Biblical Record**... within each local church family, each had their **own local leadership** ... made up of shepherding-overseers (see Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). Although some may argue that "deacons" [**Ministry Team - Servant-Leaders**] are a part of this overall local "overseeing", there are no biblical passages for that concept nor is there any biblical doctrine nor are there any biblical examples to support that concept. Thus, if a person is a part (an active member) of a local church family, they are under the shepherding covering of a **specific** grouping of men, **elders** to be exact, that are "over" that specific and **distinct** local church family. So, if a believer is somehow spread-out and involved in several local church ministries (more than their own local church family), **which** set of elders is that person accountable to, biblically? Yes, according to Hebrews 13:7,17, believers of each local church family have some sort of real accountability toward their own local church family's eldership. **Also**, to **which** local church family is that person **loyal** to, in the sense of discipleship, evangelism and missions? Which local church family is that person a part of in making, growing, and multiplying reproducing disciples (i.e. reproducing "disciple-makers" that are biblically healthy)? These are valid questions, since God's Word makes it very clear regarding this overall concept of being **an active member** of a **specific** local church family.
- 4. From the Biblical Record**... there are **no examples** of any other kind of ordained "institution" or "organization" (other than the "local church"), whether "religious", "ministry", or "para-church ministry" that would do anything other than the following (i.e.: these are our only "biblical examples"):
 - a. Missions** → discipleship & evangelism → **church planting** (also must line up with #1 thru 3 above)
 - b.** In a **temporary**, short-term, **collaborative** effort ... several churches **voluntarily** worked together to help famine **victims** in Jerusalem (and it seems clear, the major focus was to help **Jesus followers** who were famine victims in Jerusalem) [see Romans 15:25-27; Galatians 2:7-10; 2 Corinthians chptrs 8 & 9]
- 5. ROI = Return On Investment.** If a local church family, somehow is involved in supporting a local "ministry" that is not directly affiliated with, nor under their church's **full eldership oversight**... the question may come to mind, **is this a biblical practice?** And if it is, another question may come to mind, **does it benefit our local church family** [e.g.: **does it FEED new disciples into our church family, in some way?**], since it is within our local church's ministry area of influence (of course, unless it is involved in daughtering new churches [i.e.: church planting])? **Are we "getting" our "Return On Investment" regarding our investment of time, resources, finances, & prayer?**