

God's Plan of Salvation:

1. Hear - Romans 10:17
2. Believe - Mark 16:16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38
4. Confess - Romans 10:10
5. Be baptized - Acts 22:16
6. Live faithfully - Revelation 2:10

Announcements:

Sick: Mrs. Calvert, Mrs. Douglas, Mr. Douglas' mother, Mr. and Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Kelly Hall, Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Ms. Kim (Ashley Law's mother), Mrs. Lowery, Lamar Mathis, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Mrs. Siota, Mr. Winns.

If you would be interested in any of the following ways to study the Bible, feel free to let us know:

- Home Bible Study - We will come into your home or other place you feel comfortable and study the Bible with you. Bible questions are welcome in these studies and we will seek to give a Bible answer.
- Correspondence courses - We will be glad to mail you a correspondence lesson that you can fill out and mail back to us and we will send you the next lesson.
- Call us with your Bible question - #503-707-6014.
- Visit our website:
www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com.
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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Should Local Churches Govern Themselves Through Democratic Processes?

By Derek Long

American society values the democratic process in its government. It is easy for the attitudes of the society in which we live to infiltrate the church. We can especially see how such an attitude has infiltrated various denominations around us. For example, the Baptist Faith and Message says, "Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes" (*The Baptist Faith and Message*. Retrieved from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm200/bfm200.asp>). Is the concept of local churches governing themselves through democratic processes part of God's plan or not?

We must remember Jesus has been given all authority (Matthew 28:18). Christ was made head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22-23) and is the head of the body (Colossians 1:18). Christ is head of the church as the husband is head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, the church should be subject to Christ in all things (Ephesians 5:24). Churches obviously do not have the authority to do whatever the majority of people think. Churches must be governed by the word of God. It appears the above statement professes something of that sentiment in saying, "Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ." If a group of people

recognize the Lordship of Jesus, they will do the things Jesus tells them to do (Luke 6:46). Calling Jesus our Lord while refusing to follow His instructions is inconsistent. It is important for everything we do to have the authority of Jesus behind it. Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Local congregations need to recognize they are ruled ultimately by the laws given by Jesus Christ.

God’s design is for each congregation of His people to have elders (also called bishops or pastors). Acts 14:23 shows how Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. Titus 1:5 speaks of how Titus was to appoint elders in every city. Elders are addressed in 1 Peter 5:1-4 and are told to shepherd the flock of God which is among you. Shepherding is something done by pastors and therefore elders and pastors are the same group of people. Elders were told to serve as overseers. The word bishop refers to an overseer. Therefore, elders and bishops are the same group of people.

Elders were appointed to watch after the souls within the local church (Acts 20:17, 28; Hebrews 13:17). The Bible makes it clear elders rule by making decisions for the congregation within the authority delegated to them by Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). Ruling in a congregation would obviously include things like determining how best to follow God’s pattern for what a local church is to do. Ruling in a congregation does not mean elders get to add to or take away from the commandments of the Lord (Revelation 22:18-19). Elders make decisions though in areas of judgment

as they seek to lead the congregation in carrying out the will of God.

The New Testament does not speak of congregations being ruled or making decisions through a democratic process. The idea cannot be found in the word of God and therefore must have as its source men rather than God (Matthew 21:23-25). It is a way in which churches and denominations have been influenced more by the wisdom and thinking of men rather than relying upon the wisdom contained in the word of God. We need to trust God’s way as being best in all areas of life including how a local congregation should conduct its business (Proverbs 3:5-6; 14:12; 16:25; Jeremiah 10:23). We need to make sure we are not being conformed by the world around us (Romans 12:2) but following the will of God.

One problem with democratic processes governing local churches is the majority of people are often wrong. Matthew 7:13-14 shows us the vast majority of people are lost. Many times throughout the Bible the majority of people would lead people astray. In the days of Noah, the majority of people were wrong. In the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the majority of people were wrong. When the 12 spies came back from surveying the land, the majority brought back a bad report. God is not wanting his people to be a democracy. Jesus established His church as a kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19). Jesus as King has all authority. Jesus as King has decreed for local churches to be overseen by a plurality of elders and not through democratic processes.