

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, Mr. Hadley, Ms. Kim (Ashley Law's mother), Daniel Law, Lamar Mathis, Mr. and Mrs. Pete Newsome, Ms. Sowder, Ms. Ward, 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](http://www.oakgrovechurchofchristjenningsflorida.com)
- Come and visit - We always strive to have good, practical Bible instruction at each of our assemblies.

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# Matthew 18:20

By Derek Long

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (NKJV). Matthew 18:20 is a passage which has been misapplied by some. Some think the passage teaches whenever two or three Christians exist one has an assembly or perhaps a local congregation. Some may think Jesus is present in any assembly where two or three people would simply attach His name to such an assembly. Does the passage teach these things? If not, what does Matthew 18:20 mean?

Matthew 18:20 does not mean Jesus endorses any religious service where two or three people gather and attach His name to it. Matthew 7:21-23 shows how people may attach Jesus' name to the things they do and yet not have Jesus' authority for what they are doing. To "gather together in My name" would be to gather together with Jesus' authorization. When we do something in the name of Jesus, we are doing such by His authority (Colossians 3:17).

Matthew 18:20 does not teach anytime two or three Christians are gathered together that they constitute an assem-

bly or a local church. In Matthew 18:16, we read about two or three Christians rebuking a sinning brother and yet the church is not brought into the process until Matthew 18:17. It might be possible for a congregation to exist in certain situations with just two or three Christians and yet it would be wrong to consider any gathering of two or three Christians to constitute a local church. God's word teaches a local church consists of people who have joined themselves together in a locality to do the Lord's work in an area (Acts 9:26-28). A local church is expected to meet regularly (Hebrews 10:25). A local church is expected to have a weekly collection and a treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). A local church is expected to have elders or be working to appoint elders (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). It is common for a group of several Christians traveling to a place where there is no local church to assemble with to justify partaking of the Lord's Supper because there is a plurality of Christians. The Lord's Supper is to be observed within the setting of a local church assembled (1 Corinthians 11:17-18, 20, 33-34). A group of Christians traveling together does not automatically constitute a local church when they decide to gather on a Sunday.

Matthew 18:20 is part of a greater context. Jesus is addressing the disciples (Matthew 18:1). His words are particularly being addressed to the apostles. Matthew 18:15-17 gives instructions for dealing with a brother who is in sin. Matthew 18:18 shows Jesus was delegating authority to the apostles to bind and loose things on earth which were already bound or loosed in heaven. The apostles would serve as Jesus' mouthpieces after He departed to continue to reveal His truth to the world. Matthew 18:19-20 are giving them assurance that Jesus

and the Father would be with them and support them in the things they did. Matthew 18:20 may have broader application to times we gather together as Christians. Yet whatever gathering together it refers to must be something that is authorized and thus can truly be done in Jesus' name.