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Read **Acts 14:23** and we will learn that the apostle Paul and those travelling with him made the effort of ordaining elders "in every church"! God's plan has never been that

elders take the oversight over a plurality of groups meeting in different areas. He wants elders in every church! In connection with this Bible truth, we also know that deacons will be in every church, serving under the elders in every church (**Phil. 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9**; etc.). This is the divine plan!

**Conclusion**

When we compare man's ideas with Scripture, we can

**Foxhole Religion**  
By Heath Rogers

A foxhole is a place of safety that soldiers jump into in times of danger. Some people use religion this way. They live their life how they want to without feeling any responsibility towards God. They don't pray or read their Bible. They never go to church (but often admit that they "need to start going someday").

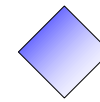
The moment something bad happens to them, they jump into the foxhole. They pray like they have never prayed before. They dust off that old Bible and desperately try to make sense out of it. If things are bad enough they will even look for a church to attend on Sunday morning. But, as soon as the storm passes, they are back to their old ways.

This reminds me of what God said about Israel of old, that their, "...faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away" (**Hosea 6:4**). Their reliance upon God was only temporary.

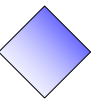
I hope we take our faith more seriously than this. God wants to be our Father—not our foxhole. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (**James 4:8**). *Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com*

see that man has gone wrong (**Jer. 10:23; I Thess. 5:21**). Let us not fall for men's ideas for a so-called "new" and "better" way. In truth, this "multi-site" or "satellite" church system is just the "same old way" (**Ecc. 1:9-11**)! It is the model of Catholicism! Catholicism's roots are found in the efforts of elders to take the oversight of a multiplicity of churches (**Acts 20:29-30**). This grew to having a "head" elder over other elders, and then a "head" over this "head" and so on, until we have the denominational juggernaut we have today.

When will we learn that God's way is not worn out, yet? His way is best! Let us follow it and be blessed (**Rev. 22:14**). *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com*



# The Voice of Truth



September 19, 2010

**Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage**  
By Jimmy Pettigrew

First, I want to say that marriage is an institution of God given to man. It was not given to Adam as an individual, or to him and Eve as a pair. It was given to man, and they were the first to enjoy its blessed provisions. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (**Gen. 2:24**). That this applies to man generally is true because strictly it was not true of Adam; He did not leave his father and his mother to cleave unto Eve, but man generally does so have to do. Since marriage is for men generally and universally, we conclude that the law regulating the institution is for all man. It is a mistake to think the laws of marriage only apply to people in the church, and not people of the world. If the laws regulating marriage are binding only on the church members, it would follow that God does not join in matrimony those who are not Christians. Marriage is not a church ordinance. Marriage did not begin on the day of Pentecost; it began with Adam and Eve.

In **Matthew 19:3** the Pharisees came to Jesus, they came testing Him, tempting Him. These Pharisees asked Jesus "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" The Lord's response: "And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made (them) from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (**Matt. 19:4-6**). Jesus settled the question by the original design of marriage, as shown in **Gen. 2:24**. The Pharisees asked the Lord; in view of His answer that there is to be no break in a marriage, "Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put (her) away?" (**Matt. 19:7**). They are saying you have to be wrong because you are contradicting Moses in **Deuteronomy 24**. Jesus answered this question by saying; "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so" (**Matt. 19:8**). Notice, first of all, that the Pharisees had interpreted **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**

as a command (**Matt. 19:7**), but Jesus corrects that in this verse by implying that Moses didn't command divorce; he rather permitted, allowed, and suffered it. God permitted this, says Jesus, because of your hardness of heart. This was not God's original intention; from the beginning it has not been this way. In other words, God's law about marriage had never been taken away. God had only granted through Moses a temporary exemption from its observance. This is extremely important to keep in mind as one evaluates the claims of certain people who maintain that **Matthew 19:9** is a covenant passage and therefore limited in application to those who are already members of the church. Since Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 19:9** is designed to reaffirm Jehovah's original marriage code; the verse cannot be so-called covenant passage, that it only applies to a Christian husband and wife. Christ's teaching on marriage was a restoration of heaven's original plan. But God's original plan surrounded mankind as a whole. Thus, Christ's teaching on marriage surrounded mankind as a whole. He will restore marriage to the level of the Father's original intention.

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his - wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (**Matt. 19:9**). "Whosoever", meaning any one, that is, this teaching is not limited to just members of the church; it applies to whatever man divorces in the manner Jesus described, "fornication". Fornication indicates the one reason for which a person might divorce a mate and remarry and still be innocent before God. Anyone who holds there is some other door than the one named by Jesus holds that Jesus did not tell truth! Whoso, that is, what ever person marries the woman put away by her husband, whether the reason was fornicating or because she burned the bread, doth commit adultery, because she is not marriageable in either case. The Lord had stressed that there is one scriptural ground

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upon which there can be divorced and remarriage acceptable to God. This, the cause of fornication! To the disciples this was a hard saying (**Matt. 19:10**).

It is alleged by some that since baptism washes away all sins (**Acts 22:16**), it sanctifies marriages which existed at the time of baptism - so - those involved in adulterous marriages (Those which violate **Matthew 19:9**) do not have to separate after baptism. They say baptism sanctifies a sinful relationship. Baptism does not destroy a sinful marriage and create a righteous one. Repentance is before baptism. Repentance demands a reformation of life. In the case of an unscriptural marriage (one which violates **Matt. 19:9**), repentance demands that one get out of that marriage. If a man has stolen a horse, if he truly repents, he will not keep the horse. Suppose a man is living in polygamy, and he decides to obey the gospel: May he continue to live with a dozen wives after his repentance and

### "Multi-Site Or Satellite Churches"

By Jarrod Jacobs

The title of this article may seem strange to some, but I assure you, this is a reality. What is meant by "satellite" or "multi-site" churches? Put simply, it means that a church has had what we might describe as a "friendly" split, and a number of folks have started a church in another location. But, they did not actually start another congregation. They maintain that this is the same congregation meeting in two (or more) different places. These groups are all under the same eldership, served by the same deacons, etc. I am told the International Church Of Christ (denomination) has done this for years. Now, other congregations in the past few years are trying it. Some of these churches who maintain "multi-site" or "satellite" churches include: Madison church of Christ (Madison, Hendersonville, TN), Highland Oaks church of Christ (Dallas, Plano, TX), and Farmers Branch church of Christ (Dallas, Carrollton, TX). Perhaps there are other groups trying this as well.

What kind of reasoning might folks have for organizing a local congregation in this way? What purpose might it serve? Consider the following statements by folks who are trying to justify "multi-site" churches.

- ◆ "It makes much more sense - saves money, resources, etc., and allows for broad based leadership and 'management.'"
- ◆ "'We're all members, one to another .... That extends

baptism? Does his obedience to these commandments of the gospel change his polygamy from unholy relations to holy relations? Polygamy is one form of adultery; living with a person who has been divorced from another for any cause except fornication is another form of adultery. Repentance means that one ceases to live in sin. The thief quits stealing when he repents, and the one living in adultery with a divorcee must dissolve his adulterous union.

Divorce for any cause than fornication does not destroy the union in God's sight. "*What God joined, no man can put asunder*". Since God joins a man to his first lawful wife and since divorce for trivial cause does not destroy that union, if the man marries he is living with one woman while bound to another. That is what makes the second union unholy. Baptism does not change the nature of that union. Jesus taught that fornication was the only cause whereby one could dissolve the marriage bond and be eligible to remarry.◆

across congregational lines."

- ◆ "Rather than expect a single model, I think we should expect to see a variety of forms of local organization. Mega-church, Multi-site, house church, missional, traditional, etc. They and whatever comes next will just jumble around, 'working' well in some places and not so well in others (sort of depends on what you think 'success' looks like, too)."
- ◆ "The multi-site church has worked in several areas, and has been more extensively used outside of the family of churches of Christ. The main purpose of this church structure is to break down geographical barriers. It gets rid of the excuse, 'I would go there but they are too far away.' Properly done, each site will have elders that meet there, but the elders at both sites make up one congregation. Really, the only limit was geography - and streaming video has done away with that."
- ◆ "Hmmm... worrying about which geographic model a congregation uses as more and more folks abandon physical meets in the first place and increasingly meet online seems to me like fighting the last war. How about an emphasis on digitizing our theological resources so they can be consumed via cellars and

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smartphones, both in the US and throughout the world at various mission sites. Are there any Churches of Christ related colleges/universities/preaching schools offering cybermissiology classes?"

(**Source:** [www.christianchronicle.org/blog/2010/09/richland-hills-church-of-christ-changes-its-name—slightly/](http://www.christianchronicle.org/blog/2010/09/richland-hills-church-of-christ-changes-its-name—slightly/))

To me, these statements are eye-opening. I included this last statement above to show us that while we consider the "multi-site" church controversial, one man is ready now to abandon meeting together at all (violating **Heb. 10:25**) and is encouraging the "digitizing" of everything. As has been said before, once the door to sin and error is opened, there is no natural stopping place!

After reading the above quotes, what is the common theme? Did you see it? It is that none of these folks discussed what the *New Testament* says concerning the church (**I Pet. 4:11**). Had they done so, they would have come to the conclusion that "multi-site" or "satellite" churches are not found there!! You know, about 20-30 years ago, folks in these congregations would probably never have considered "satellite" or "multi-site" churches. What happened to them? Put simply, a failure to teach about the church and her work, etc., has resulted in a generation of folks ignorant of the New Testament plan for the church! Now they have set out to do things the way they see fit. Because this is true, it behooves us to "hear and fear"! Why? It is because in a few years, there may be some among "us" who do not see anything "wrong" with "multi-site" churches! It is time to get a solid foundation on Bible truth before we become carried away with every wind of doctrine (**Eph. 4:14**). Perhaps now, someone reading this article does not understand what makes "multi-site" churches unscriptural. Let us learn the truth (**Jn. 17:17**). What makes the organizing of "multi-site" or "satellite" churches unscriptural?

#### This Practice Contradicts The New Testament Pattern.

When we read about congregations in the New Testament, we see autonomous (self-governing) churches. According to **Philippians 1:1**, elders and deacons were found in this church. In **Acts 11**, we read about elders in the churches in Judea as well. It is stated as fact that there were churches in different cities (Philippi, Colossae, Ephesus, Jerusalem, Corinth, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Antioch, Laodicea, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Pergamos, etc.), and these churches were independent of each

other.

We see how each church is autonomous from one another when we read about how churches in the New Testament are to do their work. When the apostle Paul spoke of the financial support he received, he spoke of the Philippian church sending him money while he worked in Macedonia (**Phil. 4:15-16**). When writing the Corinthians, he also mentioned how he received money from other churches for preaching while he was at Corinth (**II Cor. 11:8**). These autonomous churches sent the money straight to him.

Another example can be seen in **I Corinthians 16:1-3** when we see how the church at Corinth sent benevolent funds to the church at Jerusalem. When we read this text, we see that it was the *Corinthians'* money being sent to *Jerusalem*. It was not a request that the money from "The Corinthian Campus" be sent to Jerusalem! Each congregation was independent of the other, and retained this independence even when benevolent funds were sent to needy brethren.

This pattern of independent and autonomous churches is seen as well when we consider Christians joining local churches. For example, the apostle Paul tried to join himself to the church at Jerusalem (**Acts 9:26-28**). He had been in Damascus and Arabia (**Acts 9; Gal. 1**), but was now in Jerusalem, and wished to be considered a part of the congregation there! He was not going to be a member of the "Damascus church at Jerusalem"! He was in Jerusalem, and made his intentions known he wished to be a member there.

Yes, the churches were independent and autonomous from one another. This has always been God's intention.

#### This Practice Grants Elders More Power Than The New Testament Allows.

Remember, one of the practices of "satellite" churches is to have elders over more than one group (i.e., "multi-site"). Yet, when we read the Scripture, we find something different.

In **I Peter 5:2**, we read, "*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof ....*" Notice, elders are to feed the flock "*among them.*" If there is a flock in more than one town or geographic area, how can both groups be "*among*" the elders?

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