

Questions for class study:

1. What does "autonomy" mean?
2. **Ac 14:23; 20:17...28; 1Pt 5:1-3** - Based on these scriptures ...
 - a. Do "elders," "bishops," and "pastors" possess different levels of authority? Explain why.
 - b. Do the following words and phrases in these texts point to "local autonomy" Explain why.
 - i. "the flock"
 - ii. "among you"
 - iii. "shepherd"
 - iii. In the *entire NT*, do you know of any Scriptures that mention NO worldwide or brotherhood oversight of churches activities, leaders, or funds?
3. **Ac 6:1-6** - How were widows in need in the church in Jerusalem cared for? Compare **1Tim 3:10**. Do you recall *anywhere* in the NT of churches building or contributing to a "widows' home" sponsored by a church that agreed to oversee that work? Or an "orphans' home" or an "old folks' home"?
4. **Ac 11:27-30; 1Co 16:1-3; 2Co 8-9** - When unable to care for their needy, did brethren from other churches send relief to an in-between church that sponsored the relief effort, or to an man made organization for them to distribute the relief? If not, to whom did they send the relief?
5. **Ac 9:26-28** - Who controlled a local church's fellowship—the denomination's board, or assembly? respected and authoritative leaders in another city? local church? Compare **Ac 18:27**. See **1Co 5**.
6. **Ac 11:22-24** - Who selected the preacher and the place they wished to support him in? Did they confer with other churches or a council of any sort about their decision? See also **Ac 13:1-3...14:26-27**.
7. **1Co 16:1-3; 2Co 9:5** - How many churches were involved in the collection referred to in this text? Who chose the messengers to deliver it? To whom were they sending it? This is the same contribution that he writes about in his second letter, **2Co 8-9**. Other churches also participated in meeting this need (**1Co 16:1; 2Co 8:8**—the same instructions for collecting the money and send it would have been given to those churches.
8. **Php 4:15-16** - How many churches were involved in Philippi's fellowship with Paul in supporting him to preach the gospel? Note: is there any mention of a "sponsoring church" or any other organization they sent their funds to who then sent it to Paul?
9. **Ac 15** - Did the Jerusalem church act as the "mother" church or presiding church, in determining the truth of the doctrinal issue at hand? Answer in light of Paul's statement in **Gal 2:1-8**, especially **v6**. Why was the Jerusalem church involved—**Ac 15:1-2, 23-24**?
10. **Ac 2:42; 1Co 1:1; 4:17; 7:17; 14:37-38** - Why should what these churches were taught and what they did mean anything to us today about how churches are governed and what they do?

Application questions to consider and discuss ...

11. Does a church's local autonomy give them the authority to do something different than what is authorized by Christ? If you question a member, or an elder, in another congregation about the authority for the things they teach and do, are you violating church autonomy? If you expose erroneous teaching done in another congregation, are you violating church autonomy?
12. Could there ever be an occasion where you should "withdraw" (**2Th 3:6**, KJV, NKJV, ASV) from someone not in the church where you are a member? (Compare **1Co 5:4-5** with **1Tim 1:19-20**.) If you were to do so, is this a violation of local church autonomy?

What's wrong with each of the following?

1. "The government of the Roman Catholic Church is hierarchal and authoritarian ... **At the head of the structure stands the pope ... His authority is supreme in all matters of faith and discipline. Next to him is the College of Cardinals.** ... Many of the cardinals live in Rome, acting as advisors to the pope and as heads or members of the various congregations or commissions supervising the administration of the church. ... **The Roman Curia is the official body of papal administrative offices through which the pope governs the church;** it is composed of congregations, tribunals, and curial offices.
 "...**The archbishop is in charge of the archdiocese and has precedence in his province.** ... Bishops are the ruling authority in the dioceses, but appeals from their decisions may be taken to the apostolic delegate at Washington and even to Rome. **The parish pastor is responsible to the bishop; he is appointed by the bishop or archbishop ... Bishops are appointed from Rome ...**" Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the US* (Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 239 (bold mine, srf)
2. "The local churches of Methodism are called charges; **their ministers are appointed by the bishop at the annual conference**, and each church elects its own Administrative Board, which initiates planning and sets goals and policies on the local level. ... Charge, annual, and general conferences prevail in most Methodist bodies; while Methodist government is popularly called episcopal, it is **largely governmental by this series of conferences**. The charge [local church, srf] conference meets in the local charge or on the circuit with the district superintendent presiding. It fixes the salary of the pastor, elects the church officers, and send delegates to the annual conference. ... Some areas have district conferences ... Annual conference cover defined geographical areas, ordain and admit ministers to the ministry, vote on constitutional questions, supervise pensions and relief, through act of the bishop exchange pastors with other annual conferences, and every fourth year elect lay and ministerial delegates to the general conference. **The general conference is the lawmaking body of the church**, meeting quadrennially; the bishops preside, and the work of the conference is done largely in committees, whose reports **when adopted by the general conference become Methodist law.**" Mead, pp. 187-188. (bold mine, srf)
3. "They have **insisted, too, upon absolute autonomy of the local congregation ...**" p. 38; "... there was a long-standing disagreement between Baptists in the North and Baptists in the South over the nature of denominational organization ... Baptists in the United States under northern leadership heretofore [before the slave issue, c. 1840s, srf] had no central denominational organization. ... Southerners had desired instead to have **one organization controlling these various activities** ["foreign and home missions and publications"]. From the beginning **the Southern Baptist Convention was such an organization**. Northern Baptists, on the other hand, waited until 1907 to form a convention uniting their societies. This cohesion of **centralized organization** and cooperative societies has had much to do, Southern Baptists believe, with their growth." Mead, pp. 41-42. (bold mine, srf)