

Joe Smith's
Difference between an Organization and a Church
by
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Definition of a Church

The church is not a building, but it is a **group of born-again people**. God lives in us, so we are the temple of God. When God saves us and makes His habitation in us, then He will put us together with other Christians to form a church-- **a glorious structure in which God dwells (Eph. 2:19-22)**. The church today has been perverted from the New Testament description of the church. Today, much of the church is a **religious organization** rather than a **living organism**-- a live temple of God. The church of today "has a lot of theology and a lot of doctrine, but **no power**. You don't see anything like that in the book of Acts. You walk into a church in the book of Acts and **you met God. His manifested presence was there**-- the lame walked, the blind saw, the deaf hear, the dumb spoke. And that was normal Christianity." There are several **concepts** that distinguish a Biblical **church** from a religious **organization**.

1. Members

"You **join** an organization, but **you don't join the church**. You cannot join Maranatha church here in Tampa. That's an impossibility." **1 Cor. 12:18** says "**God has placed the members**, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." Therefore, "it is not the church of your choice, but it's the **church of His choice**." My name is Douglas Woolley. I became a 'Woolley' by birth. I had nothing to do with it. When I was old enough to realize who I was, I realized that I was in the Woolley family. I did not join the Woolley family; I was born in the Woolley family. **God put me in the Woolley family**. He could have put me in another family, but He chose to put me in the Woolley family.

Similarly, **God places us in the body of Christ** to be **disciplined**-- "taught, instructed, and trained" in godliness-- so that all that we do will give glory to God. However many times people move to a city and look for a church to join according to their needs and according to natural means: "God is not in this at all." They are placing themselves to where **they want** to go to church. There are two ways that God places us in a church, just as there are two ways to become a part of a family: **birth** and **adoption**.

If we have become "born again" through Maranatha church, then there should be no question as to whether we belong in this church. **We belong to the church that we were birthed into**. This church then has the **responsibility to care for us**, to teach us, to train us, to disciple us, and to pastor us. God places us in the church for us to be disciplined. Not everyone in a city is given to a particular church to be cared for; but, a church has the responsibility to care for those whom God has placed in the church. If a church cannot properly care for a member, then God may lead another church to **adopt** him/her in order to **properly care** for him/her and **disciple him/her**.

2. Involvement

Your involvement in an organization is **attending scheduled meetings**. In a church, you **participate**. **Eph. 4:16** says that the body of Christ grows by **every joint supplying**. Each person has been created by God for a purpose. We did not just evolve from some organic molecules. Instead, we have a purpose for being created. **Eph. 2:10** says we were "**created in Christ Jesus for good works**." Joe Smith says, "the only time that you will find true happiness in your life, is when you find what that **work is that God has for you to do and you start fulfilling it**. And here is where the responsibility of the church comes in. And that is that **we are to help you** and assist you and to encourage you and **to work with you fulfilling all the purposes for God for your life so that** you can be all that God has ordained for you to be."

Furthermore, **2 Tim. 1:9** says we are "called with a **holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to **His purpose** and grace." Everybody in a church gets to participate because **God has said that we each have work to do**. "We don't have people that just come to Sunday meetings." If a person has a role to play and decides not to come to a meeting, then something is missing. A body is successful and healthy because each cell is contributing to the life of the body. Each one of us is a unique cell in the body of Christ, and we each have a function. If one cell is not functioning properly and does not give life, then it is a sick cell. And if it draws life from others then it becomes cancer. God has a purpose for each person being in the church and **participating**.

"God made you special. God made you just for Himself. God made you just for His glory. If God wanted to make you some other way He could have. If He wanted to place you somewhere else He could. But the fact is He made you like you are and He placed you here, and He has a purpose for you being here. Amen. And so now the way you are going to have a **strong church** and give the glory to God that He is worthy to receive is **when all of those parts is participating**, when they are all working, when they are in perfect working order, when the attitude of the heart is to give the glory to God, and they are in that covenant relationship, then you begin to have a strong body."

3. Leadership

In an organization they **vote** on leadership, and it becomes basically a popularity contest. It is called a "congregational rules." **We do not vote on leadership** in our church, because it is not Scriptural. **Acts 13:2** says the leaders, prophets, and teachers in Antioch were fasting and ministering to the Lord and then God **the Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to be Apostles**: "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them." The leaders did not call them to the office. "**All you can do in leadership is acknowledge what God is doing in somebody's life**. You can say 'yes, God is calling him to preach,' 'yes, God is calling them to serve,' 'yes, God is calling them to pastor.' All you can really do is agree with what the Holy Spirit is doing. But, **the Holy Spirit is the one who calls leadership**. If God calls you and God anoints you, and God calls you forth, there is only one vote in the body of Christ. Guess who gets the vote? God, because He is sovereign. He is God. There is only one God."

4. Qualifications for Leadership

In an organization **anyone who is willing to serve** can be in leadership. "In a religious organization you have just a **few people doing all the work**, and everybody else just comes to meetings. That's a religious organization, because not everybody is participating. So you got 3 or 4 people and they do everything and everybody else just shows up for meetings. No involvement, no training. They're not learning how to work out God's call for they're life. So then of course, they get into problems when they try to find leadership because nobody wants to serve. Then you got to go beg and plead and try to talk them into serving and then they have a committee formed for it, and then they bring it before the congregation and they vote on it."

Instead, the Bible says that a person needs to be **faithful, loyal, and teachable** to be in leadership. Paul said in **1 Tim. 1:12** that God put him in the ministry because He considered Him **faithful**. Jesus said that if you are faithful in the little things, then you will be faithful in much (**Luke 10:16**). God will start to look at a potential leader and check his/her faithfulness in the smaller things like money (**Luke 10:17-18**). All the money, gold, and silver belongs to God (when we die we do not take any of it with us). If we cannot be faithful in the use of money which is another's, then God will not entrust us with **true riches-- spiritual things**. Spiritual things are eternal; they last forever. **1 John 2:16-17** says that the things of the world will pass away, but those **works done for God** will abide forever.

If you want to be **great in the kingdom of God**, then you need to learn how to **serve**, as Jesus did. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. "The people that God raises up or brings into leadership are those who know how to serve." **We first start to serve in natural things--** setting up chairs, helping with equipment, etc. We never get away from serving. If we ever become too good to serve or help someone, then we have disqualified ourselves from ministry. God watches us to see how faithful we are in the little things that are not ours, and then He will give us some true riches and start blessing us with things of the spirit. Joe Smith says, "I have to serve more now. There is more demand on my time and everything else now than in any other time in my life. Because `to whom much is given, much is required.' And so then I find that my time is not really mine, but there are demands made on it all the time-- always serving. **Now I don't serve so much in the physical anymore as I do in the things of the spirit**. But it is still a serving. But if I had not learned how to give of myself and to be unselfish with my time and with the blessings of God, I would certainly not be able to serve today. God calls someone who is **faithful, and loyal, and teachable**."

5. Place of Ministry

Each person has works to do and has a ministry to do. **Eph. 4:11-12** says God gave the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers "**for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,**" (the work of ministry). There are **some works that all believers do**: Jesus said in **Mark 16:17-18**, "these signs will accompany **those who have believed**; in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues... they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover." Furthermore, we all ought to witness and minister to the unsaved. **Mark 16:20** says the disciples "went out and **preached everywhere**, while the Lord worked with them, and **confirmed the word** by signs that followed." **They went everywhere preaching the word**. The books of the Bible were not completely written for another 60 years, so the "word" that they preached was "Jesus". Jesus is the living Word.

If we **really understand** that **Jesus lives inside of us** and that **we are really the temple of**

God and that Jesus has given us all authority in heaven and earth, and that God has made a covenant with us and has given us **authority to rule and to reign and to have dominion**, then we will **think differently** as a result of our belief. "You will begin to realize, 'hey, when I walk in my apartment, the kingdom of God has just shown up.' 'When I walk in my house, the church just walked in that house.' 'When I walk on my job, the kingdom of God just walked on that job.' '**When I go into a store, the kingdom of God just walked in that store, because I am the kingdom of God, I am the temple of God, God lives inside of me**'. So everywhere the [disciples] went they preached this gospel, and Jesus confirmed this word with signs and wonders following. It's not just coming to a meeting on Sunday morning, it's everywhere you go. When you really get that in your spirit, and you begin to believe that, these signs will follow you, and everywhere you go you'll act like you belong to God. **Everywhere you go you'll act like you're full of the Holy Ghost. Everywhere you go you'll act like God is there.** When you do that, whatever the needs of the people are, you'll begin to minister to them. Here will be someone who is sick and you'll lay hands on them and they'll get healed. Here's someone that will be all distraught, and you'll speak peace to them and minister peace to them. Here will be someone that's not even saved and they need Jesus and you'll share Jesus with them and they'll get saved... You don't have to tell me what you believe: I just watch the way that you live and I'll tell you what you believe. **You'll conduct your life according to what you believe. Whatever a man believes gets inside of him and moves him and motivates him in every area of his life.**"

Everywhere we go we ought to preach and live the gospel. Christianity is not fun by just coming and sitting in meetings, but it becomes fun when we get out there and participate and minister to people wherever we are. Everywhere we go, including our job, we can minister to people. Once we really believe that we have dominion and rulership over everything, then we will have a good time operating in the spiritual realm as we act what we believe.

6. Vision

"If you do not understand the body of Christ, and if you don't understand what God's desire is, then your vision is just going to be restricted to the local. What you have to realize is that **God wants you to see the whole and then integrate that into parts.**" God starts out the Bible with the whole, **Gen. 1:1**, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then, **God breaks the whole down** and specifically tells us how He created the whole. "The only reason that Jesus has a local church right here in Tampa is so **that church can fill the earth with His glory.**" God has said in **Num. 14:21**, "Indeed, as I live, **all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.**" **Is. 11:9** says, "for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." God purposes to rule over all [210] of the nations.

The reason we have a local church is so that we can be a part of the whole. It is an awesome thing to go to MLTS in Texas with 3 to 4 thousand other Christians from all over the world. We then realize that God is not only moving in our local church, but **God is really big and is working in the whole world.** "**You got to have a world vision.**" "God is interested in more than just Tampa, Florida. He is interested in the state of Florida. **How are you going to have an impact in the state of Florida if you do not have a strong local church?** It's amazing what you can do with 5000 people versus what you can do with 30 people. The idea is not just to have 5000 people just to have an impact in Tampa, because God's interested in the United States of America. Now, He is not only interested in this nation, but **all the nations.** **Everything that we're doing-- our motivation is for His glory to fill the whole earth,** amen, that is for Him to be able to rule over all nations, **that is**

the motivation in back of us. And so we don't restrict ourselves to the local."

An organization does not have a commission, but **the church has a great commission.** Most organizations are just trying to increase in numbers and to have a bigger building so that "they can have bigger local things because they do not have a world vision." Jesus has told us in **Matt. 28:19** to "GO". Since the first word in the great commission is "go", we do not need a "word" to "go", but we would need a "word" to say. **"God has already told you to go.** In fact, **God has already told you to go into all the nations** (that's plural)." God wants us to go and **disciple** the nations. "You need to get this in your heart: Some of you sitting right in this room, **if you will dare believe, God, will send you into the nations...** You get your faith up there. **You get your vision higher.** You look beyond Tampa. You get it in your spirit and you say, 'bless God, He told me to go to the nations, I'm going to go.' In other words, **set your heart to go,** don't set your heart to stay, because it's going to be **fun** for you **when you go.**

7. Government

An organization's government is by a **constitution**-- a piece of paper that says what can be done and not done. "You do have to have a charter and you have to have a constitution for legal purposes, but that's not **what runs the church. The real constitution for a church is the Bible.** Anything that God tells you to do is what you do. Anything He tells you not to do that's what you don't do. It's all written here [in the Bible]... **It doesn't make any difference what I think, what does God say.** It doesn't matter what I want, what does God want. Doesn't make any difference how I feel, what does God say about it. Because whatever God says, that's the way it is. As I said before, there is only one vote and Who gets that vote? God! And He's already told you how He votes right here [the Bible]."

Denominations will often have committees gather to determine certain issues. Some have decided to ordain homosexuals, even though God says a homosexual cannot even enter the kingdom of God (**1 Cor. 6:9**). **"Man may ordain them, but God will never ordain them.** They are going to die and go straight to hell if they don't repent. They talk about ordaining women, and I love you women, but I just want to remind you, **'God says that He gave men to rule over the church, not women.** Jesus appointed 12 apostles, not a one of them was a woman. He had all kinds of women with Him. The feminist movement has come along and told you women that you got ripped off. That's demonic: That's the Eve nature."

God has ordained that in a marriage the **man lovingly lead the wife** while **she respectfully submits to her husband.** As a result of Adam and Eve's fall into sin, the Adam nature caused man to want to **dominate her wife** rather than to take dominion. God tells the man to **love** his wife as Jesus loved the church (**Eph. 5:25**). Jesus laid His life down and sacrificed Himself totally. If a man does not love his wife then the **Adam nature will take over and cause him to dominate her.** The old **Eve nature wants to be over the husband, controlling him and manipulating him (Gen. 3:16).** Therefore, God tells the woman to **submit** to her husband. "If you don't understand God's ordained authority in the church and in the home you're going to have confusion and disorder and all types of demonic activity." We need to run our lives by the **Bible.**

8. Methods

The methods in an organization is by **tradition**. Instead, the church's methods are formed from the **Holy Spirit**. The church is to be led by the Holy Spirit. Everybody "has to be very careful because it's easy to get in tradition. It's easy even in a Charismatic church to sing three songs and then believe your going to have a prophesy and then have the message, take up the offering and go home. It's very easy to get in tradition and not be led by the Holy Spirit. It's good to plan, and its good to have organization, and I'm not against that. In fact **you need to organize life, but also you need to know that God can change it, because you don't know everything, you can't anticipate everything**. You might be thinking one way and then the Holy Spirit might be thinking another way because 'we hear in part and know in part.' And then **when we get there God wants to do something else and you can be so locked into it you can't do it.**" 1 Cor. 13:9 says that "**we know in part and we prophesy in part.**" In other words, we can believe that **God will speak to us future plans**, but we need to realize that we **may not have heard perfectly from God**, and therefore the situation may render an alternate plan of action according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

9. Decisions

A religious organization brings suggestions to the people and they then **vote** to make their decisions. The Bible says that the **elders** of a church ought to **pray and seek God** about decisions. God puts authority in the elders. **As the elders pray and seek God, the Holy Spirit will speak to them about His decision.** In Acts 13:1-2 the elders were "ministering to the Lord and fasting," and then the Holy Spirit spoke to them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work of Apostles. When Joe Smith was about to leave his 17 year career with GAF, he did not ask the people in the church to vote about it: Some might think he should, others might think otherwise. However, **he wanted to know what God thought of the decision.** He then asked the elders to pray with Him about what he sensed God was speaking to him. The elders heard from God and **confirmed Joe's decision** that it was time to leave GAF. Joe then left his career with confidence that he had heard from God.

There may be cases where the elders do not hear the same word as you do. **"I am never to hear God for you. Every individual is a priest unto God.** You know God. You got the same Holy Spirit I got. Don't ever come to me and ask me to pray and hear God for you, because I will never do it. In fact we teach all of our pastors, 'you don't ever hear God for people,' because every person is a priest unto the Lord. **You pray and God speaks to you.** You can come to me and you can say, 'Joe, I've been praying about this and here is what I believe God is saying to me. Would you pray and see if you get a confirmation.' **Now I don't mind praying with you, but I'm not going to pray to hear God for you.** There is a big difference. Do you understand the difference? Let's say now that I pray. Now when I pray I don't hear the same thing you are hearing. **I can't come to you and say you're not hearing God. How do I know that I'm not missing it. If I ever get to the place where I think that I can hear God and you can't then I'm in pride.** Now, let me build a little fence around it. Sometimes there may be something very obvious. For example, I know that God says, 'do not be unequally yoked,' and you might come up and say, 'I think God is telling me to marry this old prostitute.' I'm going to tell you that you are not hearing from God. I don't have to pray about that. Does that make sense to you? **Some things may be obvious to you because it doesn't agree with the Word.** And you know that God's not going to violate His Word. So sometimes you can tell a person 'hey, you're not hearing from God.' But, suppose you come to

me and say, 'I believe God wants me to have this job over here. Would you pray and see if you bear witness with it.' And I pray and I really sense that they really should not take that job. **I can't come to you and say 'well look, no, you are not hearing from God.** God says don't take that job.' I may be missing it. Here's what I can do. **I can come to you and say, 'I'm praying and I get a check in my spirit. I'm not hearing the same think you are hearing.'** Now you got to make a choice. You're either going to say, 'well, Joe is not hearing because I don't like what he is hearing or what he says so I'm going to take the job anyway.' Now I'll tell you what wisdom would say. **Wisdom would be 'pray some more'.**

"The Bible says there is **safety in counsel.** That's why we don't have votes. We come and **we seek the will of God** and we seek the mind of God and **we pray.** You can mess yourself up in a hurry by **voting and not hearing God.**

10. Pastor

An organization **calls a pastor** and **hires him** to do the things they don't want to do. "They hire him to visit the sick. They hire him to win souls. They hire him to preach. They hire him to teach." Since a congregation hires a pastor, they can then **fire** him if he does not work out right. Joe says that the average time that a Baptist pastor lasts before he is fired is about 18 months. "In our churches we don't hire, and we don't fire. God calls, and man doesn't hire you. And if man can't hire you, then he can't fire you." **Heb. 5:4** says that "no one takes the honor [office] to himself, but receives it when he is **called by God.**" However, **many preachers** are working because it is a good job and profession with good benefits, but they **have never really been called by God.** If God doesn't call him, then he will not be able to preach Jesus with authority and anointing.

11. Duties of a Pastor

In a organization the pastor is a **profession** and he probably has a Ph.D. They are encouraged (and required) to have many degrees in their **cemetery** (seminary). "Did you know that if you had **32 degrees** then you would be **cold.**" Many groups would not allow you to preach in their pulpit if you had not graduated from their school and seminary. However, Peter, James, and John were "**unlearned men**" who never went to college, but "the **power of God** was all over them."

"The Bible tells us [preachers] very clearly what our duties are. It tells us that we are to **teach**, we are the **disciple**, we are to **instruct**, we are to **tend**, we are to **feed**, we are to **equip you for your work of ministry.**" A religious organization wants to **come to meetings** and have the preachers do everything. Instead, **Eph. 4:11-12** says that **pastors are given to equip you for your work of service.** "So then, you are the one who is suppose to be out there serving, not the preacher. The preacher is suppose to be training you and equipping you for your work of service." Similarly, a football coach trains the players, to play in a football game, but the coach does not play. "A pastor is not a professional hired to go out and do your work. He is hired to **train you** and **equip you** so you can go out and do your work. And so every joint has got to participate. Every joint has a job to do. **Everybody has a call of God on their life.** And so then, what we are suppose to do is **oversee you.**" **1 Pet. 5:2** instructs elders to "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising **oversight.**" Pastors need to know well what is going on.

12. Relationship to Pastor

In a religious organization, the people say to the pastor, "what I do is none of your business." However, God says in **Heb. 13:17**, "Obey your leaders, and **submit to them**, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will **give an account**. Let them do this with joy and not grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." Every person will stand before God and give an account for his life. If God puts a person in the church as a leader to train others, then he will have to give an account for the responsibility. **James 3:1** says, "let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall incur a **stricter judgment**." "To whom much is given, much is required."

God places people in a church to be **disciplined by a leader**, who will train and equip them for their work of service. The leader will serve and encourage them in every way. "Jesus had his disciples; John had his disciples; and **men still have disciples today**." Joshua served Moses and eventually took Moses' place in leadership. The prophet Elijah had a man whom he disciplined-- Elisha. When Elijah left, the mantle fell on Elisha. Paul trained Timothy, and when Paul left the mantle fell on Timothy. An overseer would have joy to account for a disciple who was in the Word, serving, teachable, faithful, and a loyal friend.

When people come into the body of Christ, their spirits' are recreated, but the soul now needs to be ministered to as a result of many past hurts and rejections. **Rejection will influence you in the way you think and see and will cause you not to receive correction and discipline. Hurts cause people to be suspicious of a leader's motives**, when he just wants them to be more like Christ out of love and care. Mistrust will blind a person from seeing love and care, because he never had it before, since you can't get it in the world. Fortunately we can break the spirit of rejection and mistrust in a person who is in the family of Christ. When a person is free, he can receive love and care and discipline. His attitude will then be one of gratefulness for another correcting him. Once we have been trained and disciplined, we are then to find faithful men and teach them also (**2 Tim. 2:2**).

13. Finances

In a religious organization they take up pledges, but God says that the church is to be supported by the **tithes and offerings**. **1 Cor. 16:2** says that as we have money stored up, we should then give. Joe received a tract that said that if you believe in the virgin birth you are believing in a biological impossibility-- that Mary as a virgin could conceive and have a baby. If you believe that Jesus raised Himself from the dead then you are believing in a physical impossibility-- that someone can raise himself from the dead. The tract then said if you can believe in those two impossibilities then you should be able to believe a third impossibility-- a mathematical impossibility-- that a person can live better on 90% of his income than he can on the whole. We are encouraged in **Mal. 3:10** to bring our tithe into the church. A tithe is 10% of your income. It is the only place in the Bible where we can test God, Who will then be faithful to open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing on us. After we have given our tithe, the Holy Spirit may prompt us to give offerings.

14. Salaries

"In a religious organization, you have a board that sets the salaries; but in **Acts 2:45** you'll find the people bringing their stuff and laying it at the apostles' feet and then distribution was made **according to needs.**" **1 Tim. 5:17** says that a pastor who works hard at preaching and teaching is **"worthy of double honor."** We are to take care of the physical needs of those who provide our spiritual needs.

15. Results

The result of an organization is a bunch of lukewarm people who are just coming to a bunch of meetings (**Rev. 3:16**). In a church the people are being **conformed into the image of Christ**, which is our predestined purpose (**Rom. 8:29**). To be like Christ is to love one another, to serve one another, to use the Bible as the standard. "My desire is that every church in Maranatha be like that."