

Quick Review

- Last week, we began talking about the autonomy, independence, and equality of local churches.
- Aims:
 - To show that the entire denominational system is completely opposed to the New Testament pattern.
 - To show that certain practices by our own brethren not only lack authority, but also violate the principles mentioned above.

Three Principles

1. Churches are NOT autonomous, at least in one sense of the word.
2. Yet, there is a sense in which they ARE independent and autonomous.
3. This independence does NOT mean they should ignore other local churches.

#1 Local churches are NOT autonomous

- **Autonomy** is from the Greek words for “self” and “law,” and so it means self-governing.
- **Independent** means “not subject to control by others; not affiliated with a larger controlling unit.”

#1 Local churches are NOT autonomous

- There is a “larger controlling unit”—one lawgiver who possesses all authority.
 - Matt. 28:18–20; Eph. 5:23–24; 1 Peter 5:2–4.
- Every local church should be guided by the same truth or law.
 - Acts 16:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17; (note problem in 1 Corinthians 11).

(#2) Local churches ARE autonomous

- Each is under the authority of Christ, but autonomous and independent in **relation to each other**.
- In the N.T., we cannot find any evidence for any type of organization linking local churches together—strict or loose, named or unnamed.

CHRIST

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**Church at Troas
Overseen by its own
elders.**

**Church at Corinth
Overseen by its own
elders**

**Church at Ephesus
Overseen by its
own elders**

*These local churches never joined together
to form anything larger than the local church.*

(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- God decreed the same government for each local church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
- Oversight of these elders is limited to the “flock which is among you” (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28).
 - When men went out from Jerusalem (Acts 11:19–24) and Antioch (Acts 13:1–4; 14:26–27; 15:39–40), the resulting churches were not under the oversight of the “mother” church.

(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- Consider the letters to the 7 churches of Asia (Revelation 2–3).
 - Not sent to any regional oversight committee or organization, but to 7 local churches. Christ dealt with each one independently.
 - Some had severe problems, but no other church was charged with disciplining them. Each was expected to take care of its own problems.
 - What if Smyrna had been tied to Pergamos?

(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- Even when one or more churches assisted another with a benevolent **need**, they maintained an independence.
 - When the church at Antioch sent relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea, they delivered it to the elders of the receiving churches (Acts 11:27–30).

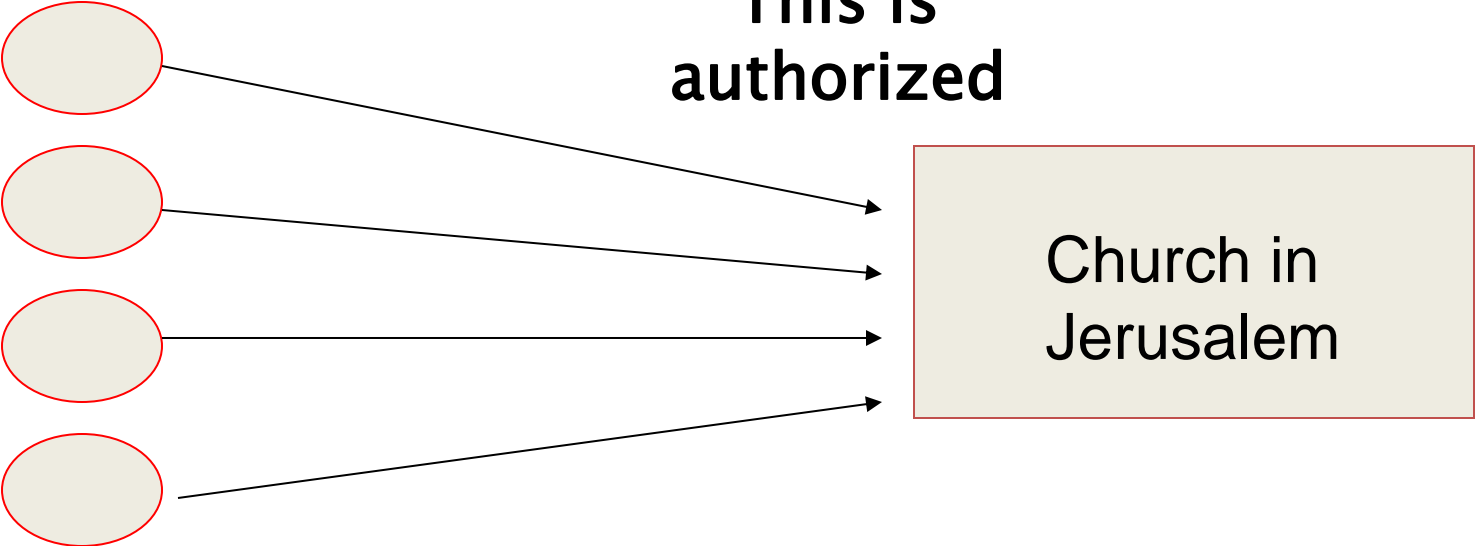
(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- Even when one or more churches assisted another with a benevolent **need**, they maintained an independence.
 - Later, churches in Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia all sent funds to the church in Jerusalem, but no “sponsoring church” was in charge (Rom. 15:25–27; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8–9).
 - Each church selected its own messengers to carry the funds (1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:18–23).

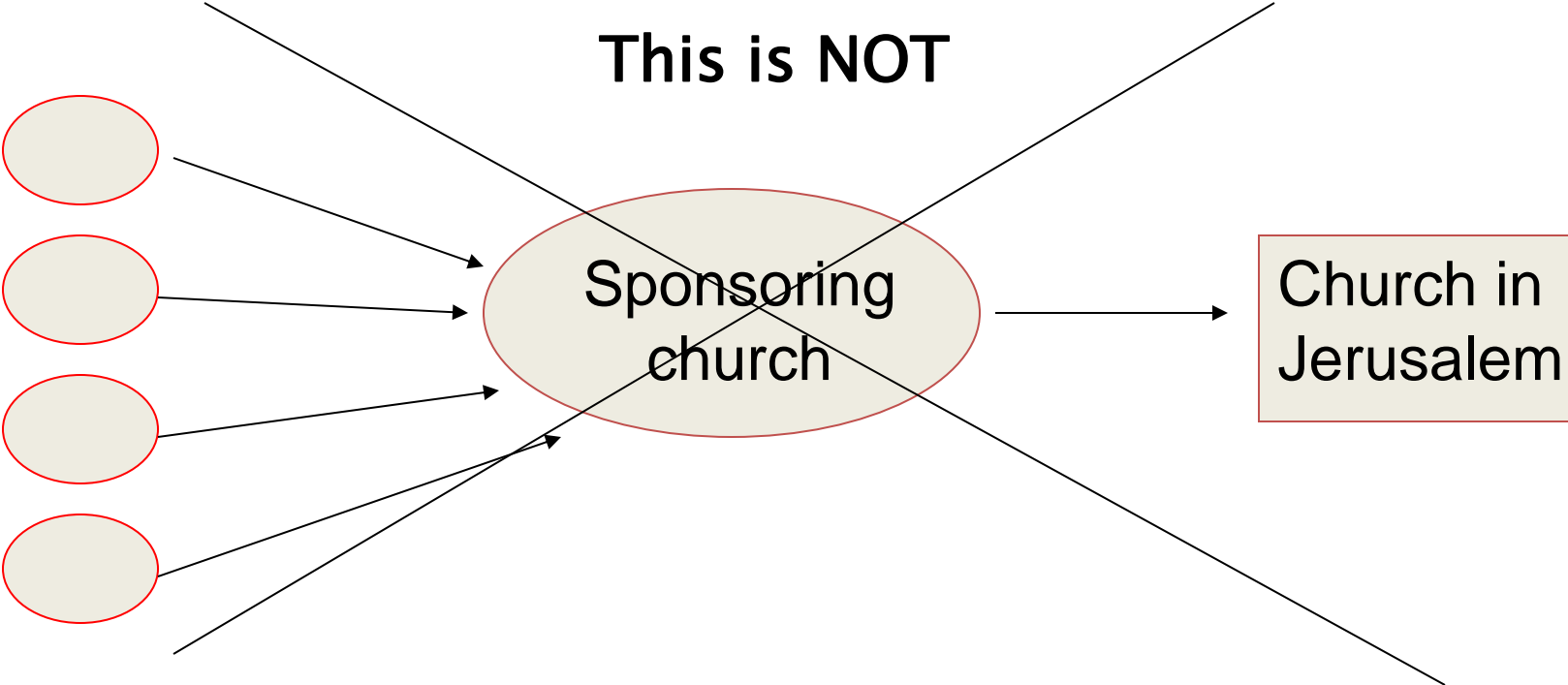
(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- Concerning this same relief effort...
 - Each church had its own “gift” (1 Cor. 16:3), so it was not lost in some cooperative fund.
 - Not intended for one church to remain dependent upon another (2 Cor. 8:13–15).

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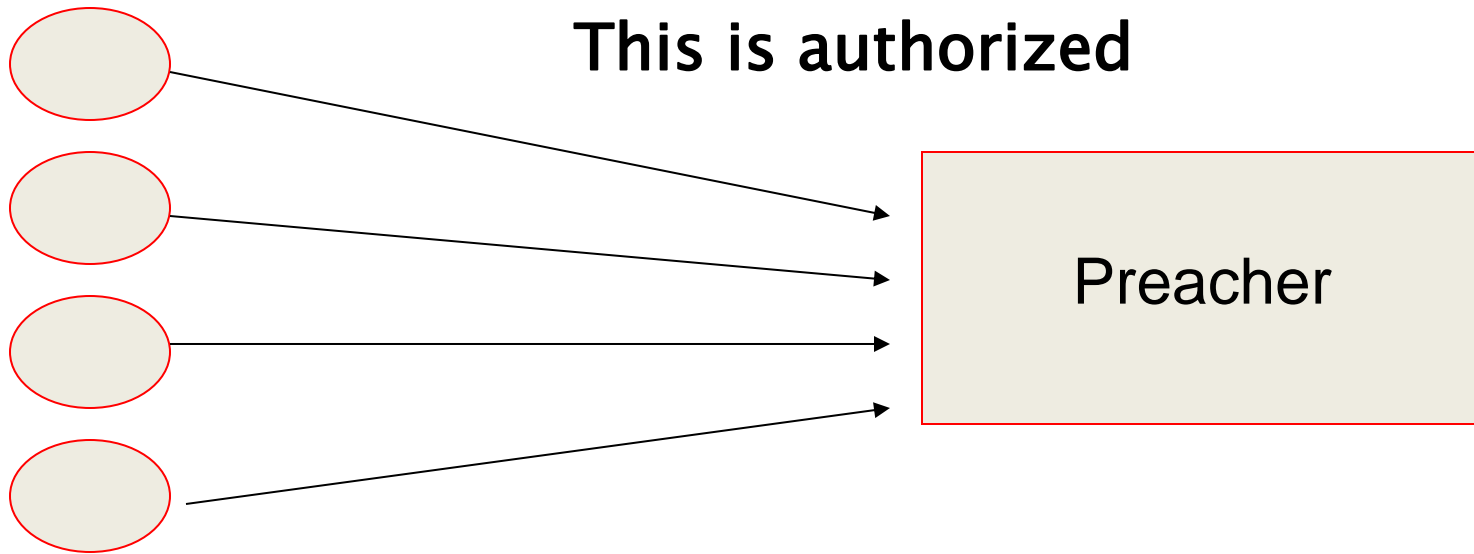
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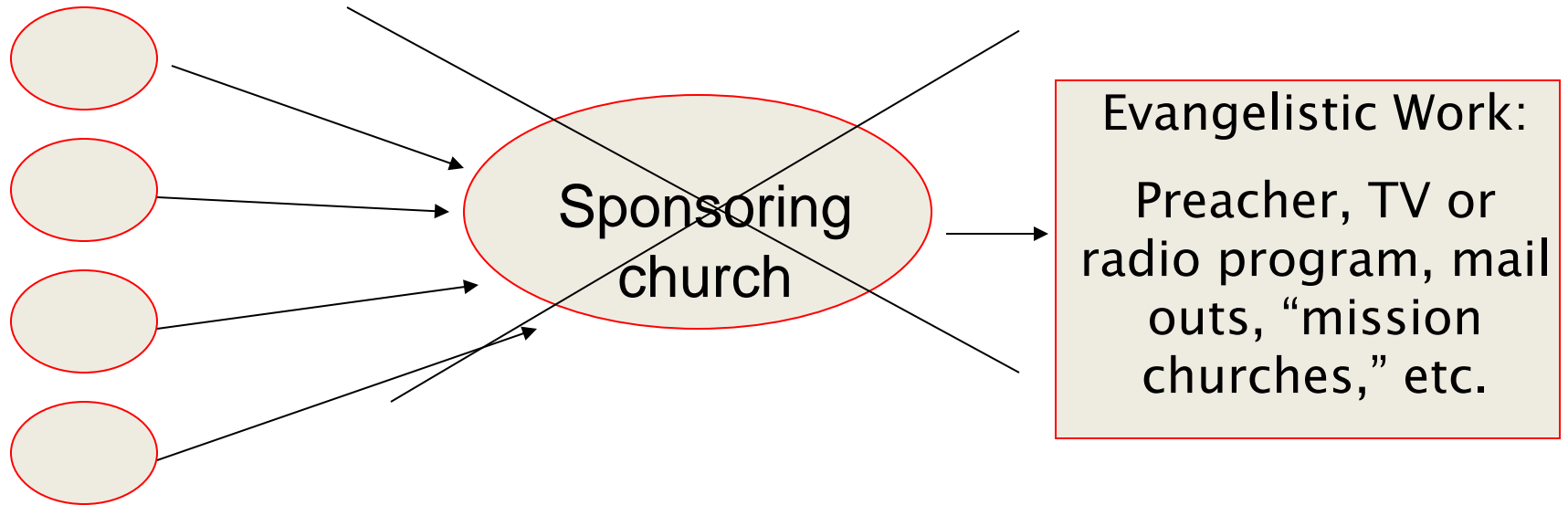
(#2) Local churches are autonomous

- No church ever sent funds to another church to support a preacher, or to support any other evangelistic effort.
 - Churches sent directly to the preacher.
 - Philippians 4:10, 14–16; 2 Corinthians 11:7–9.

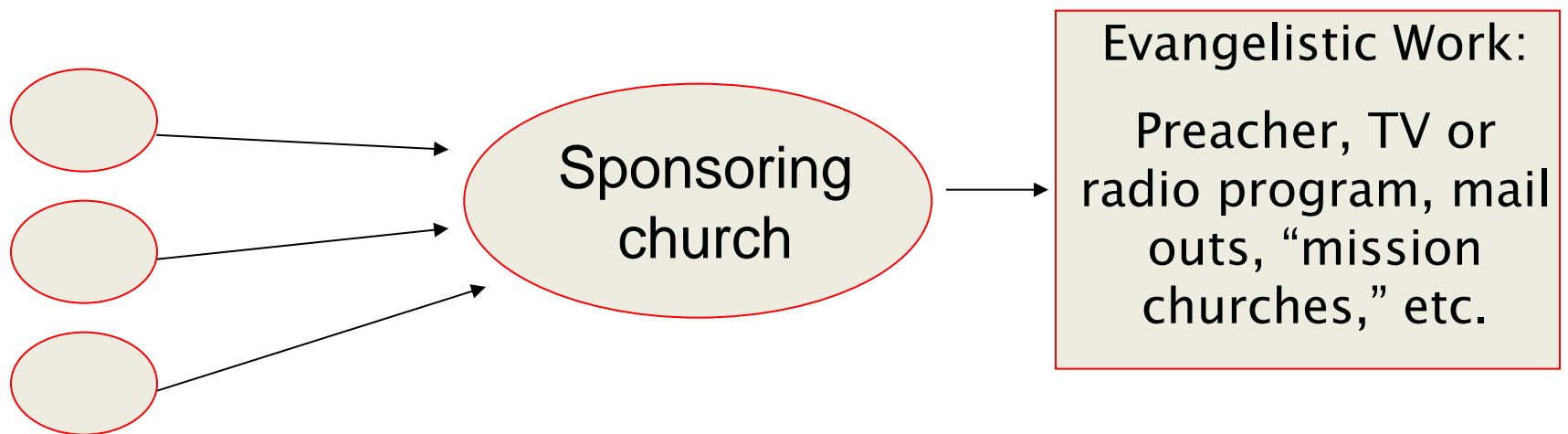
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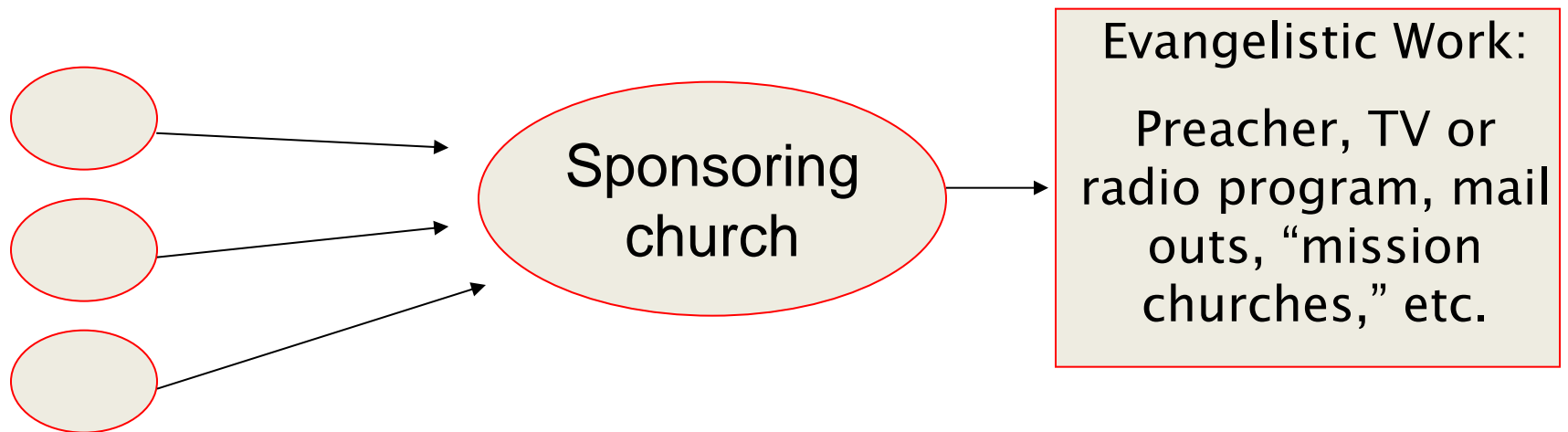
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- The N.T. makes no distinction between supporting, sponsoring, and mission churches.
- In the arrangement below, either the “supporting” churches dictate to the “sponsoring church,” or they allow the “sponsoring” church to make all the decisions.
- No longer independent, but DEpendent.



- Do we not have elders overseeing something beyond “the flock which is among you”?
- Are not all local churches equally related to this work?
- We commend the desire to spread the gospel, but first century local churches did just fine without such an arrangement.



Speak Only Where God Speaks

- “For I have not spoken on My own *authority*, but the Father who sent Me gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:49).
- “The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:24).
- For us, then, to be one with the Father and the Son (John 17:20–21), we must speak only what Jesus spoke.

Speaking Only Where God Speaks

- “Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9, NAS).
- “As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24, NAS).

Speaking Only Where God Speaks

- “From heaven or from men?” (Matthew 21:25)—that’s the ALL important question.
- “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9).