

THE CHURCH, ITS GOVERNANCE, DISSENSIONS AND WAY OUT

**A GUIDING HAND BOOK FOR CHURCH
OFFICERS.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	2
Dear to the heart of God.	2
1. UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE	3
a. The Church	3
b. Who are they (Who are the called-out people?)/ Who is the church?	4
c. The church and its purpose:	5
2. WHO IS THE OWNER, BUILDER AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH?	7
3. CHURCH GOVERNANCE	7
a. Five levels of an organized church governance (SDA Church)	9
c. The four recognized forms of Church Government	11
d. How the Representative form of Church Government Works:.....	11
4. WHO IS THE ENEMY OF THE CHURCH?	14
a. Primary adversary?	14
b. How did Satan devour the human family?	14
c. Who else is with Satan?	15
d. What does the enemy say?	15
e. What are we supposed to do to get rid of the enemy?	15
f. What kind of battle is the church faced with?	15
5. DISCERNING THE WRONG ELEMENTS OR CHARACTERS IN THE CHURCH	16
a. False believers.....	16
b. Divisions	16
c. Gossip	17
d. Wiseacre and Independent Spirit	18
6. HOW THE CHURCH MEMBERS SHOULD SOLVE DISPUTES:	20
1. Don't take issues to the heathen?	20
2. Church procedure:.....	20
7. UNITY OF THE CHURCH	21
a. The Saviour's Prayer for Unity	22
b. Many Members, but One Body	23
c. Not Toleration, but Love	24
d. Press Together.....	24
e. Bitterness and Dissension from Satan.....	25

PREFACE

Dear to the heart of God.

The church of Christ is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock. **{FLB 280.2}**

Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it." **Ephesians 5:25**. It is the purchase of His blood. The divine Son of God is seen walking amid the seven golden candlesticks. Jesus Himself supplies the oil to these burning lamps. He it is that kindles the flame. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." **John 1:4**. No candlestick, no church, shines of itself. From Christ emanates all its light. . . . The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof. **{FLB 280.3}**

At times the Lord may seem to have forgotten the perils of His church, and the injury done her by her enemies. But God has not forgotten. Nothing in this world is so dear to the heart of God as His church. It is not His will that worldly policy shall corrupt her record. He does not leave His people to be overcome by Satan's temptations. **{FLB 280.4}**

God declares that even a mother may forget her child, "yet will I not forget thee." . . . God thinks of His children with the tenderest solicitude and keeps a book of remembrance before Him, that He may never forget the children of His care. "Every human tie may perish, Friend to friend unfaithful prove, Mothers cease their own to cherish, Heaven and earth at last remove; But no changes Can attend Jehovah's love." **{FLB 280.5}**

1. UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSE

Here we shall briefly look at:

- The meaning of the word church
- Who the church is
- The purpose of the church

a. The Church

The word was first introduced and used by Christ himself and it is found in the New Testament.

It's first usage is found in the book of **Matthew 16:18**

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build **my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”**

The Greek word translated as church is 1577. ekklesia ekklesia, ek-klay-see'-ah

from a compound of **1537** and a derivative of **2564**; **a calling out**, i.e. (concretely) a popular meeting, especially **a religious congregation** (Jewish synagogue, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): --assembly, church.

Ekklesia from a compound 1537 (ek) and a derivative of 2564 (kalew=kaleo=kal-eh'-o)

ek = Origin

Klesia, Kaleo = call

Ekklesia = Original call (originally called out people)

Church = ekklesia = called out (original call) = People

So, from the roots, **a church is a group of people who have been called out**. The calling is determined by the ek (origin).

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So, it is important to note that different churches can have different origins and calling.

Our interest is to establish the biblical church.

This church is owned by the person giving the original call.

The members of this church subscribe to the caller.

This is so important to know. Who has called you, that you can be named a called-out people, a church?

b. Who are they (Who are the called-out people?)/ Who is the church?

Romans 9:24-26 Even us, whom **he hath called**, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, **I will call them my people, which were not my people**; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be **called the children of the living God**.

(1Cor 1:2 – 3) **2** To the Church of God in Corinth, **men and women consecrated in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ-- their Lord as well as ours**. **3** May grace and peace be granted to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Cor 1:9 God is ever true to His promises, and it was by Him that you were, one and all, **called into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord**.

(1Joh 1:3 – 4) **3** that which we have seen and listened to we now announce to you also, **in order that you also may have fellowship in it with us, and this fellowship with us is fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ**. **4** And we write these things in order that our joy may be made complete.

Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, sharers with others in a heavenly invitation, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest whose followers we profess to be.

Deut 14:2 For thou art **an holy people unto the LORD thy God**, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Deut 26:18 And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and **that thou shouldest keep all his commandments**;

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**.

1Pet 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; **that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**:

(1Ti 3:14 – 15) **14** ¶ These things write I unto thee, **hoping to come unto thee shortly**: **15** But if I tarry long, that thou **mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth**.

So, from a sample of the above texts, these people are both men and women called to have fellowship with God the father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They are holy brethren who share a heavenly invitation as a holy people to God who keep his commandments and are zealous for good works. A chosen generation, called the church of the living God with the pillar and ground of truth.

c. The church and its purpose:

The purpose of the church is to enable its members to fulfill the gospel commission and “make disciples of all the nations” (**Matt. 28:18 - 20**).

They are to be united as one body recognizing different roles played by each according to the gifts given.

(1Co 12:12 – 31) **12** ¶ For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. **13** For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. **14** For the body is not one member, but many. **15** If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? **16** And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? **17** If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? **18** But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. **19** And if they were all one member, where were the body? **20** But now are they many members, yet but one body. **21** And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. **22** Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: **23** And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. **24** For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: **25** That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. **26** And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. **27** ¶ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. **28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? are all

prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? **30** Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? **31** But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

2. WHO IS THE OWNER, BUILDER AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH?

Matt 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock **I will build my church**; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christ emphatically tells the whole universe that the church is His and He is the builder. No one else.

The Son of God is the foundation of the church. Those who build on him, the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. Jesus is not role playing as many call it a metaphorical son, but indeed a son in the express image of His Father's person (**Hebrews 1:3**). Those who build on trinitarian understanding of Christ are not building on the Biblical Christ, it is another Jesus and they receive another spirit (**2 Corinthians 11:4**). They are building on sand (**Luke 6:49**).

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as **Christ is the head of the church**: and he is the saviour of the body.

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, **the church**: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

3. CHURCH GOVERNANCE

(Exodus 18:21 – 22) 22 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of

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tens: **22** And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

(Deut 1:13 – 17) 13 Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. **14** And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. **15** So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. **16** And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. **17** Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

From those few quoted texts, we can clearly see that governance is biblical and the church of God for the purpose of fulfilling their mission must organize to adopt some form of government to their calling.

1Tim 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1Cor 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

a. Five levels of an organized church governance (SDA Church)

The church is an organization of individuals who hold the same faith and doctrines in common.

If all such individuals lived one locality, the form of organization would be simple. But being scattered in many lands, other steps in maintaining unity of faith and actions are necessary.

1. The Church: which is a united body of individual believers.

2. The Local Conference or local Mission field: which is a united body of churches in a district, region, state, province or a local territory.

3. The Union conference or Union of Mission field: which is a united body of conferences or mission fields within a large territory.

4. The Division: which is a division or section of the general conference, embracing local or union conferences or mission fields in large sections of the world field.

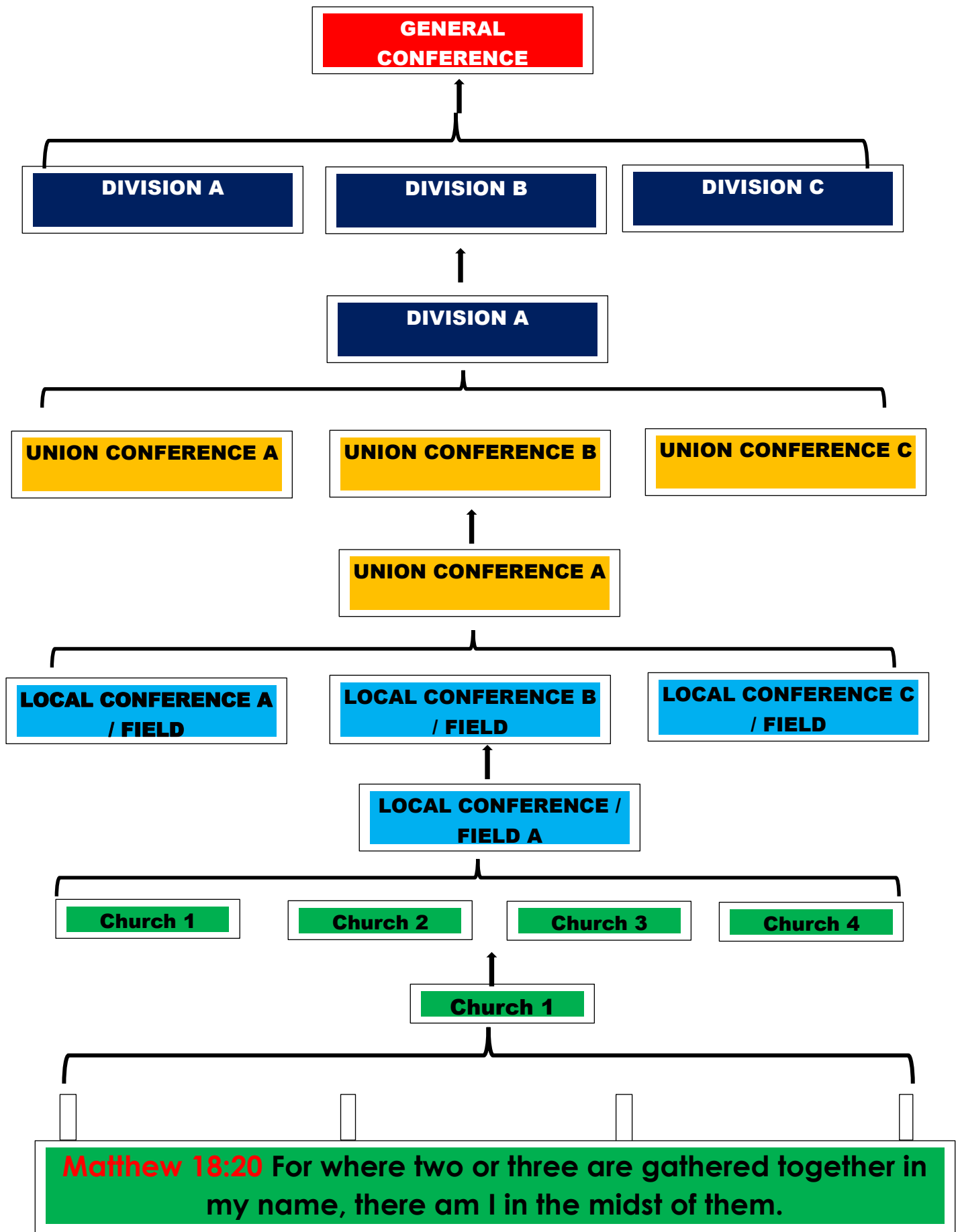
5. The General Conference: which is the general body embracing the church in all parts of the world.

Thus beginning with the individual believer there runs through the church, and local conference/mission field, union and division conference organizations a relationship that unites the whole world wide company of believers into one common body in the General conference.

Study the flow chart below:

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b. Flow Chart Demonstration of 5 Levels of Organization And Governance



b. The four forms of governance in the organized churches/levels

c. The four recognized forms of Church Government

There are four generally recognized forms of church government, which may be summarized as follows:

i. Independency/Congregationalism: it is a form of church policy that makes the local church congregation supreme and final with its own domain.

ii. Prelacy/Episcopal: it is a form of church government by bishops, usually with three orders of ministers, as bishops, priests and deacons.

iii. Papal: it is a form of government with authority vested in the Roman Pontiff and from him the church is governed by cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and priests. The local church or individual member has no voice in church administration or government. This is a form of government of the Roman Catholic Church.

iv. Representative: This is a form of church government that recognizes the right of the people to participate, at the same time recognizing the authority of representative or delegated bodies in church government, thus emphasizing the unity of the entire church body, instead of individual or local churches. Also recognizes the parity or equality of the entire ministry.

We as Seventh day Adventists, use this form of church government.

d. How the Representative form of Church Government Works:

1. Every church member in good standing votes for the election of church officers, and also votes on matters of church business, receiving and dismissing members, etc.

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God would have **His people an understanding people**. He has so arranged matters that chosen men shall go as delegates to our conferences. **These men are to be tried and proved. They are to be trustworthy men.** The choosing of delegates to attend our conferences is an important matter. **These men are to lay the plans that shall be followed in the advancement of the work; and therefore, they are to be men of understanding, able to reason from cause to effect.** {9T 262.1}

2. The churches elect delegates to the sessions of the local conference/mission fields and thereby delegate to them representative authority in the election of conference officers and the transaction of other conference business.
3. This same plan is in turn followed by the local conferences in sending delegates to the union conferences.
4. The same applies to Union conference delegates send a representative authority to Divisions
5. The Divisions delegates finally send a representative authority to the general conference sessions that unites the entire believers in the world.

God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men. {8T 236.3}

Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the

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General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference. {8T 236.4}

The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. **The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another.** When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted. {AA 95.3}

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." 1 Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God. {AA 96.1}

4. WHO IS THE ENEMY OF THE CHURCH?

- Primary Adversary
- How the primary adversary devoured the human family
- The agents working with Satan
- What the adversary has vowed to fulfill
- The safety of the church from Satan's plans
- The type of war the church faces

a. Primary adversary?

1Peter 5:8 ¶ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

b. How did Satan devour the human family?

Genesis 3:1-4 ¶ Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? **2** And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: **3** But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. **4** And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Two groups

Genesis 3:14-15 ¶ And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: **15** And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

c. Who else is with Satan?

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

d. What does the enemy say?

Exodus 15:9 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

e. What are we supposed to do to get rid of the enemy?

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

f. What kind of battle is the church faced with?

(Eph 6:11 – 17) 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12** For **we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** **13** Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. **14** Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; **15** And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **16** Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. **17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

5. DISCERNING THE WRONG ELEMENTS OR CHARACTERS IN THE CHURCH

a. False believers

(Acts 20:29-32) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. **31** Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. **32** And now, brethren, **I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.**

Points to note:

- ✓ Grievous wolves were in the pipe line to enter the church
- ✓ They will not spare the flock and the leaders
- ✓ They will invent new things to draw away disciples after them
- ✓ There is a call to be watchful, commendation to God and to His word of grace for growth and inheritance.

(Mt 7:15-19) **15** ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **16** Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? **17** Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. **19** Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

b. Divisions

1Cor 11:18 For first of all, **when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you;** and I partly believe it.

1Cor 3:3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you **envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?**

(Gal 5:14-15) 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **15** But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

c. Gossip

(Psalms 15:1 – 3) 1 ¶ <<A Psalm of David.>> LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? **2** He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. **3** He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

(James 3:5, 6, 8) 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! **6** And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. **8** But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

(Psalms 140:1 – 3) 1 ¶ <<To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.>> Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; **2** Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. **3** They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips.

Rom 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

2Thess 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

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Prov 20:19 ¶ He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Prov 11:13 A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Lev 19:16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

Exod 23:1 ¶ Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

1Tim 5:13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

(Psalms 5:8 – 9) **8** Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. **9** For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

1Pet 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

d. Wiseacre and Independent Spirit

Gal 6:3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

1Cor 3:18 ¶ Let no one deceive himself. If any man imagines that he is wise, compared with the rest of you, with the wisdom of the present age, let him become "foolish" so that he may be wise.

Prov 26:12 ¶ Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

Prov 29:20 ¶ Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

(Rom 12:3 – 9) **3** For through the authority graciously given to me I warn every individual among you not to value himself unduly, but to cultivate sobriety of judgement in accordance with the amount of faith which God has allotted to each one. **4** For just as there are in the one human body many parts, and these parts have not all the same function; **5** so collectively we form one body in Christ, while individually we are linked to one another as its members. **6** But since we have special gifts which differ in accordance with the diversified work graciously entrusted to us, if it is prophecy, let the prophet speak in exact proportion to his faith; **7** if it is the gift of administration, let the administrator exercise a sound judgement in his duties. **8** The teacher must do the same in his teaching; and he who exhorts others, in his exhortation. He who gives should be liberal; he who is in authority should be energetic and alert; and he who succours the afflicted should do it cheerfully. **9** Let your love be perfectly sincere. Regard with horror what is evil; cling to what is right.

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

2Cor 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Prov 11:14 ¶ Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Prov 15:22 ¶ Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Prov 24:6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Prov 20:18 ¶ Every purpose is established by counsel: and with good advice make war.

6. HOW THE CHURCH MEMBERS SHOULD SOLVE DISPUTES:

1. Don't take issues to the heathen?

(1Cor 6:1 – 8) **8** ¶ Dare any of you, **having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?** **2** Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? **3** Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? **4** If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. **5** I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? **6** But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. **7** Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? **8** Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

2. Church procedure:

(Mt 18:15 – 20) **15** ¶ Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. **16** But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. **17** And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. **18** Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. **19** Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in

heaven. **20** For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

7. UNITY OF THE CHURCH

"I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." **Eph.4:1-3.** {1907 JNL, COOD 57.1}

The apostle, when addressing the Philippians, said, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." **Phil.2:1-5.**

To the Corinthians he wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." **1Cor.1:10.**

When writing to the Roman brethren he exhorted to the same unity, adding force to his appeal by reference to the example and teaching of Christ, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." **Rom.15:5-7.**

a. The Saviour's Prayer for Unity

"That union and love might exist among his disciples, was the burden of our Saviour's last prayer for them prior to his Crucifixion. . . . 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou has sent me.' **John 17:20**
- 26

The children of God are called to be representatives of Christ, showing forth the goodness and mercy of the Lord. As Jesus has revealed to us the true character of the Father, so we are to reveal Christ to a world that does not know His tender, pitying love. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world," said Jesus, "even so have I also sent them into the world." "I in them, and Thou in Me; . . . that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." John 17:18, 23. The apostle Paul says to the disciples of Jesus, "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ," "known and read of all men." 2 Corinthians 3:3, 2. In every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world. If you are Christ's follower, He sends in you a letter to the family, the village, the street, where you live. Jesus, dwelling in you, desires to speak to the hearts of those who are not acquainted with Him. Perhaps they do not read the Bible, or do not hear the voice that speaks to them in its pages; they do not see the love of God through His works. But if you are a true representative of Jesus, it may be that through you they will be led to understand something of His goodness and be won to love and serve Him. {SC 115.1}

Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of His service. {SC 115.2}

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If we do represent Christ, we shall make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving to others a false representation of God and the Christian life. They give the impression that God is not pleased to have His children happy, and in this they bear false witness against our heavenly Father. {SC 116.1}

"The apostle adds a caution to the independent and self-confident: 'If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. . . . Every man shall bear his own burden.' He who considers himself superior in judgment and experience to his brethren, and despises their counsel and admonition, evinces that he is in a dangerous delusion. The heart is deceitful. He should test his character and life by the Bible standard. God's Word sheds an unerring light upon the pathway of man's life. Notwithstanding the many influences which arise to divert and distract the mind, those who honestly seek God for wisdom will be guided into the right course." - "Testimonies for the Church." No. 31, pages 232, 233, 239, 243. {1907 JNL, COOD 58.2}

b. Many Members, but One Body

The apostle Paul illustrates the union which the Lord desires to the manifest in his church on earth by the harmonious action of all the members in the human body: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." **1Cor.12:12, 13.**

"Those who claim to members of Christ's body will allow their own fancies, their likes and dislikes, to shape their conduct toward even God's own delegated servants. After Christ has made the infinite sacrifice to redeem us from the oppressive power of Satan,

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shall we fail to pity and help those who are fallen and sinful like ourselves? Shall one man usurp authority over his brethren, and hurt their souls because he imagines that he has authority, and can do this work? The Lord 'suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.'" {1907 JNL, COOD 59.1}

c. Not Toleration, but Love

"Every arbitrary exaction of man toward his fellow man will react upon himself in double measure. Just in proportion as the human agent is a partaker of the divine nature, he will be in sympathy with Christ. Jesus says, 'a new commandment I give unto you [that ye tolerate one another? - No], that ye love one another. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.' " - Review and Herald, May 26, 1896. {1907 JNL, COOD 59.2}

The apostle Peter calls attention to the example of Christ, and exhorts to unity in these words: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter 2:21-23. {1907 JNL, COOD 59.3}

d. Press Together

"Let each who claims to follow Christ, esteem himself less, and others more. Press together, press together! In union is strength and victory; in discord and division there is weakness and defeat. These words have been spoken to me from heaven. As God's ambassador, I speak them to you. Let every one seek to answer the prayer of Christ - 'that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.' O, what unity is this! And, says Christ, 'By this

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shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' " - "Testimonies for the Church," No. 33, page 16. {1907 JNL, COOD 59.4}

e. Bitterness and Dissension from Satan

"Followers of Jesus Christ will not act independently one of another. Our strength must be in God, and it must be husbanded, to be put forth in noble consecrated action. It must not be wasted in meaningless movements. In union there is strength. . . . No strife or variance should exist among the workers. The work is one, superintended by one leader." - Ibid., page 63. {1907 JNL, COOD 60.1}

Again, "Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God, by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord's people. The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when the people of God should press together, it is now." - "Testimonies for the Church," No. 31, page 232; Vol. V, page 236. {1907 JNL, COOD 60.2}

All this is in harmony with the words of the psalmist, **"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."** **Ps.133:1.** {1907 JNL, COOD 60.3}