



• **Let your “yes” or “no” be binding** (Matthew 5:37).

All of these principles of living as Christians must regulate our behavior in any relationship which we have with others in this life.

We have seen that Christians are a part of the Divine organization of the Lord’s church. We have also seen that Christians maintain responsibilities within the family organization as well as the organization of civil authority. Finally, we have also seen that while Christians may be a part of man-made organizations, their behavior must be regulated by godly behavior and character. Someone might

then ask, “*Does that mean I can join any organization I want?*”

We have seen regarding civil authority that a Christian must disobey any human laws which command the violation of God’s law. *What if an organization does or promotes things that are wrong?* Such organizations do exist. These would include criminal gangs, but also those kinds of organizations that promote what is sinful. A political group that would advocate abortion as a matter of “choice,” or pornography and homosexuality as “freedom of expression,” certainly is not a proper type of organization for a Christian to join. Social clubs that promote drinking, coarse jesting, or dancing would be equally inappropriate.

There might be organizations which are wholesome of themselves but make demands upon a Christian’s time commitments that would prohibit being associated with them. *Do I have to miss services because of my membership? Will my time and influence over my family be jeopardized? Will membership keep me from my duties to serve the Lord?* All of these questions need to be asked. If the answer to any of these is “yes,” even though I might have the *right* to join such a group, the compromise of values it would demand means that it would be *wrong* for me to do so.



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BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

September 9
2012



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Should Christians Be Members of Human Organizations? By Kyle Pope

When a person obeys the gospel, he or she makes a commitment to follow Christ above everything else. Jesus taught, “**He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me**” (Matthew 10:37, NKJV). This is a serious commitment. It teaches us that we must never allow our job, our interests, our hobbies, our citizenship, or even our families to ever become more important to us than our commitment to the Lord. *Would this principle suggest to us that it is wrong for Christians to join or be members of any type of organization?*

Christians are by definition, members of a Divine organization. The church is an organization that was established by God. It has leadership (Christ is the head – Ephesians 5:23; elders and deacons lead local congregations – 1 Timothy 3:1-13). It has membership (Christ adds those obedient to the gospel to the church – Acts 2:47). As a result, it is not only appropriate for a Christian to be a member of the church but it is part of the

very definition of being a Christian to be a part of the Lord's church universally (Hebrews 12:22-23). If a Christian seeks to be faithful to the Lord he will also identify with a sound local congregation of the Lord's church (Acts 11:25-26).

By birth, all human beings are placed in another organization—the home. In this organization there is also leadership (husbands are the head of the wife—Ephesians 5:23;



Olsen Park church of Christ

the wife is to manage the house – 1 Timothy 5:14); children are to obey their parents – Ephesians 6:1). When Jesus teaches not to love family “more than” Him, He does not call upon Christians to abandon their responsibilities within the family. To the contrary, putting Jesus first in our life demands that we carry out our commitment to our families as Christians should. The husband must lead (1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 6:4), the wife must submit (1 Peter 3:1), parents must teach (Deuteronomy 4:9) and children must honor their parents (Ephesians 6:2).

Both of these organizations are established, constituted and governed by God. What about other types of organizations? In the epistle to the Romans, Paul taught, **“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God”** (Romans 13:1). God does not dictate the particular type of government that rules a nation (i.e. democracy, republic, monarchy, dictatorship, etc.). God does not regulate the structure and functioning of a particular government (i.e. parliament, bicameral legislature, ruling council, etc.). Yet, Paul teaches Christians to submit to the organization of the governing authority of their given nation. They were to submit to the leaders themselves as well as the laws which they passed (1 Peter 2:13). Only in the instance where the governing authority demands that a Christian disobey God, is a Christian authorized to violate such laws (Acts 5:29). This does not suggest that when government is corrupt, or engaged in wickedness a Christian can defy government by refusing to pay taxes. Jesus taught, **“Render to Caesar the things that are**

Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” (Mark 12:17).

Christians in the New Testament were not only in submission to their government but they were also members of the governmental organization of their nation. Erastus was **“the treasurer of the city”** (Romans 16:23). In the Philippian letter, Paul extends greetings from saints within **“Caesar's household,”** a reference probably to servants rather than family members (Philippians 4:22). Cornelius was a centurion, in charge of 100 Roman soldiers (Acts 10:1-48). Paul himself, acknowledged his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28) and utilized its benefits (Acts 25:11). This shows us that membership in a governmental organization is not a violation of our commitment to love Christ “more than” all other things. If these Christians were faithful, they honored their heavenly citizenship over their earthly citizenship (Philippians 3:20).

There are many other types of organizations founded wholly by human beings which Christians may be asked to join. These might include business partnerships, trade organizations, neighborhood associations, clubs, guilds, troops, packs, etc. Biblical parallels to these types of organizations might include the business partnerships which existed between the two families of James, John, Peter, and Andrew—they were **“partners”** in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). Paul may have shared a limited partnership with Aquilla and Priscilla—co-workers

in the tentmaking trade (Acts 18:2-3). The Bible does not outline terms for such partnerships. *How were the duties divided? How were the funds shared? What regulated their activities?* All of these questions were determined by the human beings involved in the organizations. It seems clear that the issue was not whether a Christian could be a part of such an organization but how a Christian behaved in interaction with others. Notice a few principles that would apply:

- **Treat others as you would yourself** (Matthew 7:12).
- **Look out for the interests of others** (Phil. 2:4).
- **Speak the truth to others** (Zechariah 8:16).
- **Don't set a stumbling-block before others** (Romans 14:13).
- **Don't be presumptuous about the future** (James 4:13-15).