

A close-up photograph of a cobblestone path. The stones are dark grey and rectangular, arranged in a staggered pattern. Green moss is growing in the cracks between the stones, particularly in the center and lower right. The lighting is soft, creating a slightly blurred background.

**AS INDIVIDUALS**

# THE CHURCH AND ITS WORK

- The church is made up of every saved individual. There is only one church (Eph. 4:4, 1 Cor. 12:13, Col. 1:18) and we are added to it when we put on Christ in baptism (Acts 2:47).
- The church operates, as the church, only on the local level. There is no world headquarters, and the only leader over the entire body of believers is Christ (Col. 1:18, Eph. 1:22-23). The only human leadership we see in the New Testament, aside from the apostles, is local, autonomous elderships (1 Pet. 5:1ff, Phil. 1:1, Acts 14:23). The only collective activity of the church is also local and autonomous.
- “Church” is just a term for a group of people, whether universal (the church; the totality of all saved people) or local (a church; a congregation of Christians in a particular community).



# CHRIST

**EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN SHARES FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST**

**CHURCH A**



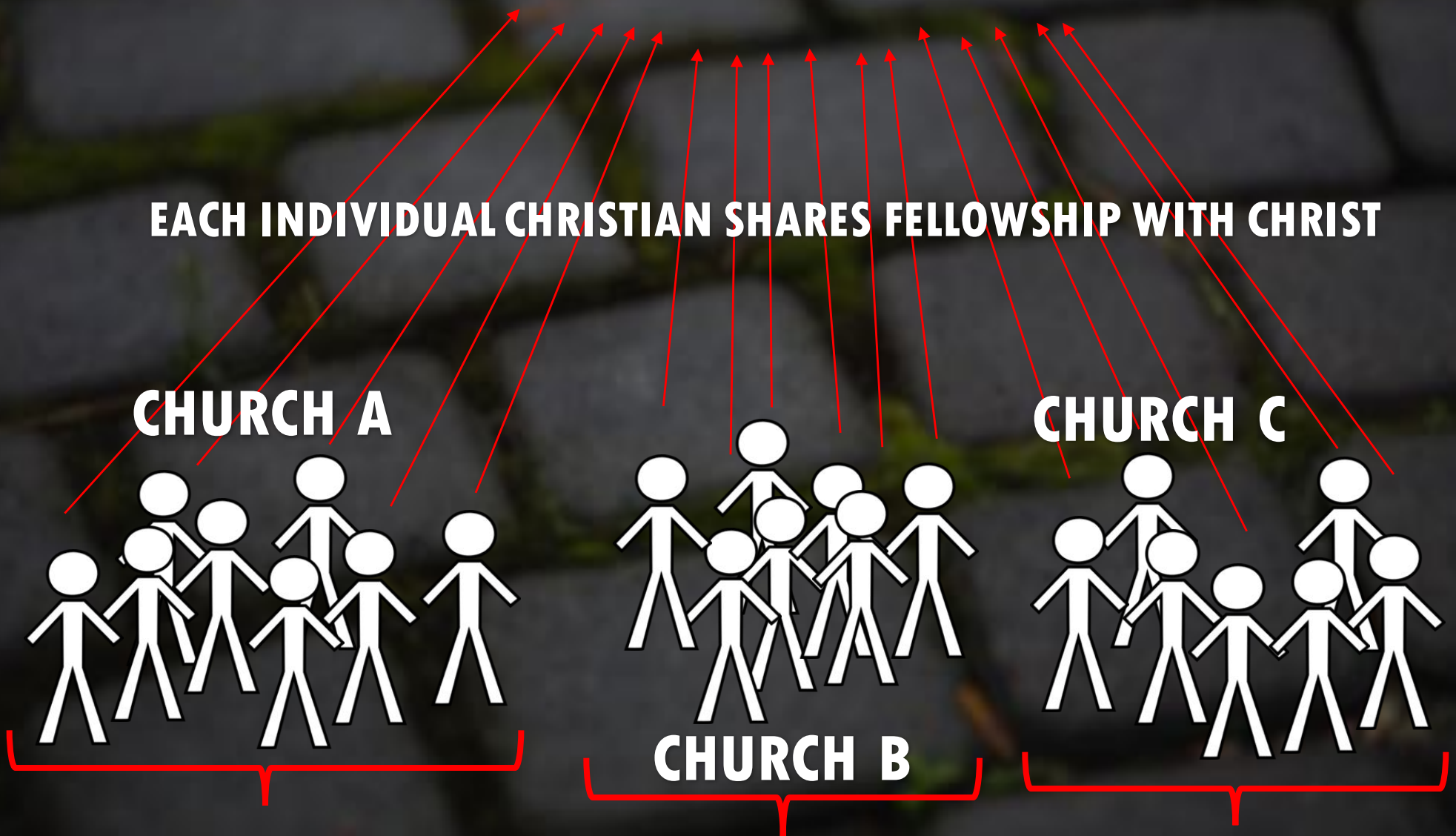
**CHURCH C**



**CHURCH B**



**INDIVIDUALS SHARE FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER LOCALLY**





**1 JOHN 1:3, ROMANS 12:4-5,  
HEBREWS 10:23-25**



# OUR CONNECTION ONLY GOES SO FAR, HOWEVER

- Local churches are only authorized to do their own work. Elders are to oversee their own flocks (1 Pet. 5:1ff). Church members are to submit to their own leaders (Heb. 13:17). Therefore, what “Church A” does only impacts its own members. “Church B” has no institutional connection to “Church A.” It shares fellowship with Christ, but there is not a single word in the New Testament that authorizes two or more congregations to organize themselves into a confederation, denomination, synod, sponsoring church, or missionary society.
- Even within a congregation, each individual member stands or falls based on his own personal standing with God (2 Cor. 5:10). There is no “group” salvation or condemnation.
- All of this protects both the congregation and the individual (see the examples found in Revelation 2-3).

# THE CHURCH MUST NOT BE BURDENED

- Local churches are tasked with a clear pattern of work in the New Testament. This includes benevolence for fellow saints, preaching and teaching the word, edification and discipline, and collective worship.
- Individual Christians are given other mandates beyond their obligations to the work of a local congregation. The church, collectively, should not be burdened with the work that individual Christians must be doing.
- Individuals have a mandate to take care of their own family members (1 Timothy 5:1ff).
- Practicing charity to unbelievers (Gal. 6:9-10, Acts 3:6).
- Working and making money (Col. 3:22ff, 2 Thess. 3:12, Eph. 4:28).
- Raising children (Eph. 6:4, Col. 3:21).





**“What the individual can do,  
the church can do.” Really?**

**JAMES 1:27, MATT. 18:15-17, 1 COR. 11:18, 28**