

# A Sample Letter to Your Congregation

*The following letter emphasizes that every member in the body of Christ is subject to church discipline as taught in Matthew 18, including those in leadership. I include this as a template for you to use in your own efforts to argue for church authority within your own congregation.*

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My dear brothers and sisters,

I'm writing to humbly bring an urgent matter to your attention. The Bible clearly teaches that all Christians are subject to the discipline of Matthew 18. No one in the body of Christ is exempt. It is a loving and redemptive process—one our Lord has given us to sort out our differences when necessary and primarily to keep the Church holy and in good repute, providing a compelling testimony to a watching world.

At [CHURCH/ORGANIZATION], laypeople have been removed entirely from this process. Instead, others who are not even members of that local body of believers are hired *without the authorization of the congregation* to assume a role only those in the local church should take. At the very least, the church should have the opportunity to address its own affairs.

It is reasonable for someone other than a local member of the church to help facilitate this process (at the church's bequest), but he is not authorized by Scripture to make any *ultimate decisions*. That is the responsibility of each particular local body of believers.

When a church neglects this responsibility, the consequences can be devastating. Brothers and sisters, God has provided everything necessary in our local church for the congregation to investigate, discern, and take care of its own affairs. Every gifting necessary to navigate these waters has been provided *by* Christ, *for* the body of Christ. Jesus has tremendous trust and absolute confidence in the Church to manifest His wisdom, counsel, and disposition regarding all the matters that confront a congregation. *The problem is: we have been taught otherwise.*

While there are several expressions of church polity that embrace the biblical principle of the church having the ultimate authority to manage its own affairs, we can't completely dismiss a principle that's clearly established in Scripture. If we do, it is at our own peril.

A congregation that refuses to embrace and apply one of the most important aspects of its ministry—church discipline—will eventually compromise its calling as a compelling witness of God to their surrounding community (John 17). When a church ignores these responsibilities and instead chooses passivity and denial, it is in danger of losing this witness to a watching world.

If our individual response to these recent revelations is to say nothing, do nothing, be passive, and “let the leaders handle it,” then we are effectively enabling poor leadership and shirking our responsibility as members of our local church.

This does not reflect well on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Bible says the Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth. It portrays the Church as robust, indwelt with the power and presence of Christ, and full of all the giftings necessary to manifest Christ's supernatural wisdom, counsel, and majesty on the earth. We are not to be a bunch of cowering, emasculated people who don't know how to judge rightly our own affairs as in 1 Corinthians 6:2-4. We are to reflect Christ's wisdom and authority, especially in the matters we face today.

I want to challenge each one of us to study the Scriptures. Don't allow our loyalty to the Word of God to be trumped by our allegiance to a certain way of doing church. Be a Berean. Drill

down into passages that are relevant to the topic. At the very least, answer the following question:  
“Does the church have authority?”

RISE UP, CHURCH! We need to get involved. We need to ask questions. We need to confront individuals, including leaders, where necessary and speak the truth in love. We need to insist that the Church follow the course and remedy God has provided in His Word to handle such problems. We need to raise our voice and receive the mantle God has placed upon us as His holy people.

STAND UP, CHURCH! We are the pillar and foundation of the truth. We are not the body of Elijah. We are not the body of John the Baptist. We are not the body of Paul. *We are the body of Jesus Christ.* To be associated with the Name that is above all names should tell us something about who we are as believers. *We are the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* Let's act like it.

Your brother[/sister] in Christ