

Biblical Support for a Church of Churches Philosophy

1. City-Wide Church Identity

Scripture often refers to the church in a city as one unified body (Acts 8:1; 11:22; 13:1; Romans 16:1, 4–5; 1 Corinthians 1:2). These city-churches were composed of multiple house churches yet identified as a single church.

2. House Churches as Units of the Larger Body

Believers met in homes (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2). Each house church was a true church, but together they expressed the larger city-wide church.

3. Shared Leadership Across Churches

Elders and overseers were appointed to guide networks of believers, not just single groups (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:17–28; 1 Peter 5:1–3). Leadership was plural and shared across the city-church.

4. Unity of the Body of Christ

Paul describes one body with many members (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1–16). Gifts were distributed for the good of the whole body, reflecting unity across churches.

5. Paul's Strategy for Movements

Paul planted networks of churches in key cities and regions (Acts 19:8–10; 1 Thessalonians 1:7–8; 2 Timothy 2:2). He trained leaders like Timothy and Titus to establish and multiply churches, focusing on movements rather than isolated congregations.

Realities We Hope to Explore

Pastors/Deacons/Benefactors: These are verifiable structures explicitly referenced in Scripture, rooted in household intent and language—unlike roles not named in title or with institutional intent (e.g., coach, youth/college director, life group, worship leader). We seek to explore these realities.

Oral Tradition: Western church planting tends to *add* (30+ churches), while oral traditions multiply (1,000+ churches). We want to explore this contrast and engage the West, which we believe is monumentally oral and untapped in this regard.

Kerygmatic & Didache: The *kerygma* is truth spoken; the *didache* is truth shown. Show and tell. More is caught than taught. Many church struggles stem from dissonance between what is told and what is shown. Paul's ecclesiology and theology of identity are grounded in household imagery, which is easily

distorted when reduced to modern didactic frameworks. We would like to explore greater congruence between show and tell, allowing both to speak with integrity and power.

Church Buildings: Until the 3rd–4th centuries (Dura-Europos, c. 230 AD; Edict of Milan, 313 AD), churches met in households. We want to revisit this reality. Why was this so, and what has been lost? We also see that centers like Antioch and the Festivals were powerful synergistic supports of the feasts as they spread, and we'd like to explore how these equipped the people more regularly, rather than eclipsing them.

Paul: Paul described both the church of a city (e.g., Corinth) and of a house (Rom 16:5) in autonomous fashion, yet united under his “basic principles.” Why was this their reality, and why today do we reduce “church” to singular branded entities? We would like to explore this.

Persecution: COVID forced churches back into homes; one small persecution deflated the Western model. Quite curious. Globally, “church of churches” structures thrived *because* they expected persecution from the onset. They multiply in it, fortified by God’s design. America nears this doorstep. We want to explore how God uses basics to restore the visible and invisible way the church thrives anytime, anywhere, under any circumstance. We personally believe that the reality of persecution, now **presumed** in how we meet, will increase in the coming days into what we must **assume**, and we wish to explore ways to better love people in/through those times.

Alignment / Partnership: Crossway affirms Pastors across the Network (which we embrace) while allowing local variance (Amen!). They function as a church of churches—bound in relationship, alignment, mission, and Paul’s “basic principles,” yet with autonomy. Can “city Pastors”—see the org chart—be “Crossway-affirmed”, while “church-pastors/LG-leaders” remain autonomously affirmed by our church body?
