

The Work of the Church

- ☛ Evangelism
- ☛ Edification
- ☛ Benevolence for Needy Saints

30; Romans 15:25-28; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9). Since a contribution from the church treasury is an expression of fellowship in Christ (2 Corinthians 8:1-4), this **benevolence** is also spiritual work.

Thus the divinely authorized work of the local church is limited to **evangelism, edification, and benevolence to needy Christians**. As the local church is a spiritual relationship, its authorized activities are uniformly spiritual.

The Work Corrupted

Although the New Testament plainly reveals a pattern for the work of the church, a blueprint of activities that will cause the congregation to grow and prosper spiritually, many churches have completely or partially abandoned this divine plan for humanly devised schemes of church functions.

Probably the most prevalent corruption of the work of the local church is **general benevolence**, giving material help to the lost from the church treasury. Not only is this a corruption of the divine pattern of congregational benevolence, it amounts to using carnal attractions to bribe people to hear the gospel. The Lord refused to feed people who came to Him for food for the belly (John 6:26-27).

Many churches have blindly blundered toward the Social Gospel by sponsoring **social and recreational activities**. How many buildings owned by churches contain kitchens and “fellowship halls” to be used for the entertainment and social activities of the members and others? Most new church buildings contain “family life centers,” which are simply sanctified gymnasiums. Many churches sponsor camps, ball games, skating parties, retreats, etc. “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17). God appeals to the spirit, Satan to the flesh (Romans 8:5-8).

its own members are met (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:3-10) and that needy Christians in other places are also helped (Acts 11:27-

Many churches provide schools for **secular education** and support colleges. The Lord’s church has the responsibility of teaching people the Bible and Bible-related subjects, such as singing, which help us to be better Christians (cf. 1 Timothy 3:14-15; John 17:17). Colleges as separate, service organizations have the right to exist and to teach the Bible. But there is no authority from Christ for the church to teach secular subjects.

Many churches **fight to obtain political, social, and economic rights** for minorities. The causes may be good in the social sphere, but they are not part of the God-ordained work of the church. Paul urged the Corinthians, whether slave or free, to “abide in the same calling” they were in (1 Corinthians 7:20-21). In a society of gross injustice and even slavery, the inspired apostle made no attempt to change the social or economic orders. Christ did not suffer on the cross to establish social, political, and economic justice. The gospel is spiritual not social, and the church is not a civil rights organization.

Finally, some churches enter the arena of **partisan politics**, trying to influence political affairs. The kingdom of Christ is a spiritual government, not a political state (John 18:36). The Lord’s church has absolutely no place in politics.

Conclusion

What kind of congregation do you want to be a member of: a nice, comfortable church that does little and expects little of you, a “live-wire” church that engages in all sorts of fun activities, or a faithful church that diligently does the Lord’s work and expects you to pull your share of the load? Your choice reflects what you want to be (1 Corinthians 15:58). Be zealous in the Lord’s work and be a member of a local church that diligently does what He directs.

Questions for Review

I. True/False

1. _____ Christians should be actively doing the Lord’s work.
2. _____ It is not important for the local church collectively to have a zealous program of work.

3. ____ The local church should engage in any work that seems good to us.
4. ____ The congregation is a business relationship.
5. ____ The primary responsibility of each congregation is to be the pillar and ground of the truth.
6. ____ The three works which the Lord has authorized the local church to do are evangelism, edification, and benevolence to needy Christians.
7. ____ The congregation need not worry about taking the gospel to the lost.
8. ____ The church should build up its members by preaching and teaching the word of God.
9. ____ The congregation should not help needy Christians in other parts of the world.
10. ____ The church collectively should give benevolent aid to sinners.
11. ____ The congregation should provide recreation.
12. ____ Secular education is a proper work of the congregation.
13. ____ The church should campaign for civil rights.
14. ____ The congregation must not engage in political activity.
15. ____ The local church may do anything the individual Christian may do.

I. Matching

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| 1. ____ pillar | A. building up one another by preaching and teaching the word of God |
| 2. ____ ground | B. column that upholds a roof or other structure |
| 3. ____ evangelism | C. material help to the needy |
| 4. ____ edification | D. foundation |
| 5. ____ benevolence | E. taking the gospel to the lost |

Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson Twenty-four

The Work of the Church

Introduction

The apostle Paul was always thankful for the church in Thessalonica because of their “work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4), and congregations today must be zealous in the Lord’s work. But we must do only those things the Lord authorizes (Matthew 7:22-23). The Scriptures equip us “for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17), thus, regardless of how good an activity may seem to us, if it is unauthorized by the word of God, it is not a good work. What is the scriptural work of the local church?

The Nature of the Church

The local church is the only organized relationship within the realm composed peculiarly of God’s people, the universal church. As such, it is spiritual in its nature (John 18:36; Romans 14:17; Ephesians 1:3,22-23). Thus, we should expect its work to be spiritual.

Authorized Work

What is the divinely authorized work of the local church?

The primary responsibility of each congregation is to be “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:14-15). A “pillar” is a column that upholds a roof or other structure. The word “ground” refers to a foundation. The basic function of the church is to uphold and support the truth, the word of God (John 17:17).

This means the congregation must be actively, zealously, steadfastly engaged in the work of **evangelism**, taking the gospel to the lost. Like the church in Thessalonica, we should preach the gospel everywhere to everyone (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8; cf. Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).

But we also must be diligent as a congregation in the work of **edification**, building up one another by preaching and teaching the word of God (Ephesians 4:11-16; cf. Matthew 28:20).

But each local church should see that the material needs of all