

Back To Basics

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A Monthly Journal Dedicated To Teaching First Principles

SPECIAL ISSUE: THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Johnie Edwards

Few seem to know the place of the Lord's supper in the worship of the New Testament church. This issue of *Back To Basics* calls us back to some first principles concerning the Lord's supper.

1) **THE WORK IS SPIRITUAL.** When we understand that the "kingdom is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17), we can see the work of the church is spiritual and not social.

2) **THE WORK HAS BEEN SPECIFIED.** The Lord did not leave it to the church to decide what its work would be. Rather, the work is divinely directed. Writing the Ephesians, Paul was exact in revealing the work of the Lord's church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

3) **THE WORK IS THREEFOLD.** The work of the Bible church can be summed up in three words: Evangelism, edification, and benevolence (Eph. 4:11-12).

4) **EXAMPLES OF THE WORK.** The Lord

did not leave us without examples of this work being done. The church at Thessalonica "sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" (1 Th. 1:8). This sounding out the word is evangelism. Acts 6:1-6 finds the first church taking care of their needy as needy "widows" were cared for by the local church. Acts 9:31 tells, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified..." Also, the Ephesians were told of "edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). The work of edification is the building up of the church.

5) **WORK WAS DONE BY THE CHURCH.** When God set up the church, He made it all-sufficient to do all the work He assigned it to do. The Lord's church does not have to depend on human organizations and societies to do its work. Since the church is Scripture-guided, it follows that the church has all it needs to do the Lord's work (2 Tim. 3:16).

May this special issue help all of us in understanding the basic work of the church.

ONE IS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, THE OTHER IS NOT!

Roy E. Cogdill, "Dead Yet Speaketh"

Sometimes the question is asked: "What difference does it make whether each congregation takes care of its own 'charge' in the work of relieving the destitute; or all of the churches do their work through a human organization built and maintained by them for this purpose?" The difference is exactly this: *One is found in the New Testament and the other is not!* (Acts 6:1-6).

Then sometimes brethren are heard to ask: "What difference does it make whether a church sends a preacher and supports the preacher by sending money to him; or sends the money to another church and lets that church support a preacher with it?" The difference, again, is exactly the same: *One practice is found in the New Testament and the other is not!* (Phil. 4:15-16).

"What difference does it make whether each church does its own work, by using its own

resources, under the supervision of its own eldership; or pool its resources with another con-

gregation or a group of congregations, as a means of cooperating in fulfilling their preaching mission?"

The difference is exactly this: *One is found in the New Testament and the other is not found there!* (Phil. 4:15-16; 1:1).

"What difference does it make whether a church sends its contribution directly to a preacher or church; or through another church, acting as its agent?" The difference is exactly this: *One is found in the New Testament and the other is not!* (Phil. 4:15-16; Acts 11:27-30).

"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching of Christ, the same hath both the Father and the Son" (2 Jn. 9; see also, Eph. 2:12).

*"Whosoever goeth
onward and abideth not
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hath not God..." (2 Jn. 9).*

Back To Basics

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"THE WORK OF THE TABERNACLE"

John Isaac Edwards

Fifty-three times, in the book of Exodus, reference is made to "the work of the tabernacle" (Ex. 35:21). In many ways, the tabernacle shadows the church (Heb. 8:1-5). Notice some similarities between the work of the tabernacle and the work of the church:

1) **A PATTERN TO BE OBSERVED.** In Mount Sinai, God gave to Moses "the pattern of the tabernacle" (Ex. 25:9), with the admonition, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25:40). If the tabernacle, which was but a shadow of things to come, was to be according to the divine pattern, how much more should all things pertaining to the church be according to the plan and model of the New Testament.

2) **SUPPORTED BY SPIRITED GIVING.** Tabernacle work required "offering unto the Lord...of a willing heart" (Ex. 35:5). Verses 20-29 show the Lord's people giving unto the Lord with hearts stirred up. The people gave so freely that they had to be "restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much" (Ex. 36:5-7). The work of the New Testament church is wholly supported by the freewill offerings of its members (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). May the spirit of the tabernacle givers ever be in those who contribute to the work of the Lord's church.

3) **DONE AS THE LORD COMMANDED.** As Moses inspected the tabernacle work, "behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded...and Moses blessed them" (Ex. 39:43). All the work was according to all that the Lord commanded! If some of us had been charged with the work of the

tabernacle, would it have been less than or greater than what the Lord commanded? Certainly the work of the church must be equal to the Lord's commands (Col. 3:17). A blessing always follows those who build according to the pattern.

4) **FINISHED WITH GLORY.** Exodus 40:33-38 records, "So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." When the Lord's work is brought to completion, according to His will, the Lord is glorified. Paul wrote, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). Anytime we stray from the Lord's pattern for the work of the New Testament church, we take glory away from the Lord!

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EDIFICATION: "THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS"

Johnie Edwards

The apostle Paul identified one work of the church as that of, "the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:11-12). Christians need to be built up. The basics of edification involve:

1) CHRISTIANS MUST BE TAUGHT.

Matthew's account of the Great Commission included teaching after one becomes a Christian. "Go ye therefore, and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: *Teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Mt. 28:19-20). Have you given any thought to the fact that only one book, the book of Acts, tells us how to be saved from past sins, and twenty-one books, Romans thru Jude, tells us how to be built up and stay saved? Teaching is a drawing magnet and the religion of our Lord is a teaching religion. Jesus revealed, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God" (Jn. 6:45).

2) **CHRISTIANS MUST BE BUILT UP.** The word of God has building-up power. Paul's farewell address to the Ephesians included, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). A lack of basic Bible teaching has caused a lot of church members to be spiritually weak.

3) **THE CHURCH IS SELF EDIFYING.** The Lord's church is fully capable to do all of the edifying required by the Lord. Paul penned, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by

that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the *edifying of itself* in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). The church of Christ does not have to depend on a college, or any other human institution, for its edification!

4) **SOME THINGS WHICH EDIFY.** Not everything we might conjure up edifies. For a thing to edify, it must first be lawful (1 Cor. 10:23). We must let the Scriptures tell us what has been designed to edify the Lord's people.

① *A church at rest edifies.* Acts 9:31 states, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified..." A church at peace will grow and be edified.

② *Paul said, "charity [love] edifieth"* (1 Cor. 8:1). When there is love among brethren, you will find a built up group.

③ *Working toward the good of others edifies.* "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom. 15:2).

④ *Understandable words edify.* While regulating spiritual gifts, Paul urged men to speak words which could be understood "to the edifying of the church" (1 Cor. 14:1-17).

⑤ *Paul said that "sharpness" in teaching edifies* (2 Cor. 13:10). Too many tread lightly, speak softly, afraid some might be offended and "sharpness" in preaching is never done!

⑥ *Good communication edifies* (Eph. 4:29). There must be mutual edification among brethren, but this has no bearing on whether or not a church has a regular, located gospel preacher. Most preachers help rather than hinder edification!

Let's get back to doing some basic edifying teaching and preaching.

BENEVOLENCE: "THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY"

Johnie Edwards

Jesus said, "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good..." (Mk. 14:7). Since we will always have the poor among us, we need to study to know what the Bible teaches concerning our responsibility toward the poor. Whatever the Bible says on this subject will be the pattern to be used in this work. Thus, we take a look.

1) **THREE AREAS OF BENEVOLENCE.** We use the word "benevolence" to convey what Paul told the Ephesians concerning this work, "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12). The divine pattern reveals three areas where caring for the needy occurred: First, a personal/individual responsibility; second, the church relieved the needs of certain people; and third, churches assisted another church in meeting the needs of caring for their needy. We now explore these three areas.

2) **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.** Jesus taught that individuals must be about doing good works. "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). Jesus pointed out to the rich young ruler, by his giving "to the poor, thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19:21). Churches do not lay up treasure in heaven, individuals do. Matthew 25:31-46 pictures the judgment scene. In it, there are individuals who assisted the needy. The story of the good Samaritan features an individual taking care of a needy one (Lk. 10:25-37). Zacchaeus, an individual, said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor" (Lk. 19:8). Dorcas serves as a good example of an individual "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did"

(Acts 9:36). Paul worked with his hands, "ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34). He further instructed the Ephesians, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). The house of Stephanas "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (1 Cor. 16:15). James 1:26-27 enjoins upon individuals to care for widows and orphans. Perhaps 1 Timothy 5 contains the most pointed instruction toward personal responsibility in caring for the needy. "If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them" (1 Tim. 5:16). In addition, "But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God" (1 Tim. 5:4). Children and even nephews have personal responsibility in caring for their family members who may be in need. A failure to do so makes them "worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8). One reason individuals are to relieve their own family members is, "let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows in deed" (1 Tim. 5:16).

3) **CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY.** The church has been charged with "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:12), in a very limited way. A careful study of the Scriptures will reveal the church cared for its own needy saints, like in Acts 6:1-6. Paul writes the Romans, "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). Romans 15 finds the apostle Paul involved in caring for needy saints. "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:25-26). As Paul gave the divine pattern for the church to raise funds to do its work, he penned, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This particular gathering was to be used to relieve the poor saints in Jerusalem. 1 Timothy 5:5-10 is the record where Paul describes the “widow indeed,” who having met certain qualifications as, “Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusted in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day, threescore years old, having been the wife of one man; well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the

afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.” The church can “enroll” such a widow.

4) CHURCHES ASSISTED OTHER CHURCHES.

Acts 11:27-30 gives us a pattern when the church at Antioch assisted churches in Judaea who could not meet their relief needs. A “great dearth” caused some to be in need. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability decided to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” There were “churches” in Judaea (Gal. 1:22). Funds were not sent to a sponsoring church, who in turn sent to the other needy churches. Rather, funds were sent directly to the elders of the needy churches! And, this is the way it must be done today to be Scriptural.

May we study the basics to know about caring for the needy and who is to do so!



It is common to hear brethren express concern for lack of growth. Do you ever wonder why so many churches are not growing? Could it be that we are just not putting the seed, which is the word of God (Lk. 8:11), in the soil? Too many are content to leave the seed in the barn (Hag. 2:19).

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Johnie and John Isaac Edwards are in position to spend a weekend with the church where you worship to teach this Soul Winning material.

EVANGELISM: "THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST"

Johnie Edwards

The early church was charged with, "the edifying [building up] of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). This charge resulted in the preaching of the gospel as Jesus commissioned the apostles (Mk. 16:15-16). The result of this work was enlarging church borders. This basic Bible material takes a three-view look at New Testament evangelism.

1) **PERSONAL EVANGELISM.** Personal work, the teaching of others, is the work of every Christian. Paul instructed Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to *teach others* also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Faithful and able men teaching others is personal evangelism. And there is just not enough of this going on today! Saving self is one thing, but we must remember there are others who need saving. This is one reason inspiration says, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself* and *them* that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). A good example of personal evangelism is seen when "they that were scattered abroad went every where *preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4). Instead of throwing up their hands and quitting, these early Christians went about doing personal work. Helping setup and conduct home Bible studies among the unsaved is a work we all can do. Let's get at it!

2) **CHURCH EVANGELISM.** The primary work of every church of Christ is preaching the gospel. Paul penned, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the *pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15). Many churches today have

put gospel preaching on the back burner, and are doing all kinds of unscriptural works never assigned the church. "Sounding out the word of the Lord," like the Thessalonians did, is church evangelism (1 Th. 1:8). Every local church is responsible to do the work of evangelism according to its ability. Paul told the Corinthians, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (2 Cor. 11:8). As in any field of endeavor, "The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:18). This would include the support of gospel preachers.

3) **EVANGELISM OUTSIDE THE LOCAL CHURCH.** New Testament churches, being interested in the spreading of the gospel, looked beyond their local areas, and supported the preaching of the gospel elsewhere. The church at Philippi set a good example of this. "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity" (Phil. 4:15-16). The pattern in evangelism differs from that in helping needy saints. When the work of evangelism was done, the funds were sent directly to the preacher in the field doing the work. In assisting needy saints beyond the local work, the funds were sent to the elders of the needy churches (Acts 11:27-30). It can be seen from the Philippian passage that the funds were not sent to a missionary society or even a sponsoring church, but to the preacher directly! This divine pattern needs to be observed today as we do evangelistic work.

CONGREGATIONAL COOPERATION

Bill Cavender

Jesus, about six months before His death on the cross, said, “I will build my church” (Mt. 16:18; Acts 2:36). His church would be built upon the central truth of the Scriptures, confessed by Peter, that “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16). Each sinful individual in the world who professes this sincere faith in Jesus from a truly penitent heart, and is immersed in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, is saved from past sins, and is a child of God through faith, being added to the church by the Lord Himself (Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-41, 47; Gal. 3:26-29).

These righteous and justified people, called “Christians” first at Antioch (Acts 11:26), worshipped God our Father and worked together for Jesus our Saviour as brothers and sisters, in the localities, cities, and villages where they lived. They voluntarily associated themselves together, in love of the Father and the Son, in love of each other, and in love of the truth of the gospel, and formed “the church” in that place or locality. Such brethren are referred to as “the church” in the Testament. They would be “a church of Christ,” as there was not any other kind or type of people who wore the name of Jesus Christ in the first century (Rom. 16:16).

We read of “the church” which was at Jerusalem (Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1; 15:4); “the church” at Antioch (Acts 13:1; 14:26-28); “the church” at Caesarea (Acts 18:22); “the church” at Ephesus (Acts 20:17); the church, “to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints” (Rom. 1:7); “the church” at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1); “the churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16); “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2); “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2); “the churches of Judea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:22); “the church” in Philippi (Phil. 4:15); and the church of the Laodiceans, the church of the Thessalonians, the church at Smyrna, the church

at Pergamos, the church at Thyatira, the church at Sardis, the church at Philadelphia, etc. All of these are separate congregations in various localities, hence “local churches,” saved people, belonging to Christ.

These congregations were autonomous bodies of brethren, separate from and independent of each other. Each local church had its own elders (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 6, 22; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; Ti. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Each local church maintained its own treasury, chose its own servants, and attended to its own worship, work, and membership (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 5:1-13; 11:17-34). There is a complete absence of any kind of hierarchical functionaries, any “universal church dignitaries,” any kind of centralized organizational arrangements (as a “Papacy,” “College of Cardinals,” “Conventions,” “Councils of Bishops,” “Overseeing Elderships,” “Missionary and Benevolent Societies,” “Boards of Directors,” “National Presbyteries,” “Sponsoring Churches,” “Associations,” etc.). The apostles were the only “general officers” in the first century churches (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Never in the New Testament was there an attempt by the Holy Spirit-guided apostles to “organize” these local congregations into some type or kind of universal, world-wide unit, nor are there any instructions as to how anyone, then or now, could go about to Scripturally do so.

Does Jesus, the Head of the church, allow these local churches to “cooperate”? Certainly! Each and every local church is a “cooperative” of individual Christians, each child of God working out his/her own salvation in fear and in trembling (Phil. 2:12), and being helped by all their brothers and sisters in that congregation (Eph. 4:7-16). Each local congregation, in doing its own work, caring for its own needy, teaching its own members, sending out its own chosen servants to preach, carrying on its

own worship services, maintaining its own purity in doctrine and morals, is “cooperating” with every other congregation in the world which is doing the same thing and following the same instructions written in the New Testament.

In 1849, when delegates from one hundred fifty-six churches of Christ met in Cincinnati to form the “American Christian Missionary Society,” a centralized agency through which local churches would work in preaching the gospel throughout the world, brother David Lipscomb pointed out the digression from Scripture in which brethren were engaging. He illustrated “cooperation” between individual congregations by comparing such to “cooperation” between individual farmers. A farmer plows his own ground and farm, plants his seed, cultivates the crop, lays it by, and harvests his crops in harvest time. If a neighbor farmer becomes ill or disabled and cannot attend to his farm and crop, then his neighbor friends and farmers will come to his aid, plow his ground, plant his seed, cultivate his crop, and harvest it. But when the sick farmer is well again, he returns to attending his own farm and his neighbor farmers cease to help him and return to their own work and farms. Farmers are “cooperating” when they all attend to their own work.

Churches did “cooperate” in the New Testament. Antioch sent to the elders of the churches in Judea, one time (Acts 11:27-30). The apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to help Philip and brethren in Samaria, one time (Acts 8:14-17, 25). The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help the new church in Antioch, one time (Acts 11:22-24). Paul instructed Gentile churches of Christ to collect a contribution for poor saints in Jerusalem, one time (1 Cor. 16:1-3; 2 Cor. 8 & 9; Rom. 15:25-31; Acts 21:17-19; 24:17, 26). The church at Philippi “sent once and again,” twice, to Paul as he preached in Thessalonica and departed from Macedonia (Phil. 4:15-16). While in Corinth, Paul “robbed other churches” to preach in Corinth, brethren from Macedonia supporting him (2 Cor. 11:7-10). These are the cases and examples of local churches “cooperating” in the first century under

apostolic direction. No centralized agencies and functionaries were established nor authorized. When the work was done, the contributions and “cooperation” ceased, and the independent churches went on doing their own regular work. There were no permanent “missionary” or “benevolent” programs and agencies, societies, ever established by the apostles through which local congregations would or could function. In the Testament, when a church or churches supported a preacher, they sent their wages directly to the preacher, not to and through another church or another agency. In the Testament, when a church or churches sent to a church or brethren in physical need, they sent directly to that needy church or individual(s). There are no “central agencies” of any kind or description in the Testament.

By these examples, our Master has shown us “how” local churches can “cooperate” when an extraordinary need might occur. Otherwise local churches continue to do their own work and carry on their own worship and teaching, day in-day out, under their own elders, using their own resources and talents, attending to their own business. If our Lord Jesus Christ has not taught us “how” local churches may “cooperate,” by these examples, then “the sky is the limit” and churches are free to “organize and cooperate” any way they desire. This is what the Roman Catholic and denominational churches do.

Our brethren, with their “Missionary and Benevolent Societies,” “Boards of Directors,” “Sponsoring Churches and Sponsoring Elderships” are on the same downhill road with the same digressive attitudes toward the New Testament, and Scriptural authority as the Catholics and denominationalists have. They are the Christian Churches of the nineteenth century all over again. And now many of them are adding mechanical instruments of music to their services of worship! History is repeating itself.

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Kid's Activity Page

Paul Adams

Memory Verse: *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Work Of The Church

Fill in the missing vowels to spell words that describe the work God has given the church to do.

The work of teaching God's word is:

__ V __ N G __ L __ S M

The work of building up the church is:

__ D __ F __ C __ T __ __ N

The work of helping needy saints is:

B __ N __ V __ L __ N C __

Multiple Choice:

What group of needy people did the church collect money for in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2?

- 1) Saints 2) Hebrews 3) Everybody

Jesus told the apostles in Matthew 28:18-20 that they were to teach, baptize, and _____.

- 1) Send them away 2) Continue Teaching 3) Move On

***"Suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).***

WHAT THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IS NOT

James Hahn

In this article, we wish to call attention to those things which are *not* authorized by God as the work of the church.

1) **POLITICAL ISSUES.** Even though there are issues such as abortion, homosexuality, etc. that we must oppose and teach against, we must recognize it is not the work of the church to develop or carry out a political agenda. These issues may be political issues for some, but as the people of God we deal with them the same way we deal with other sins; by teaching the word of God and seeking a change of heart in those who hear.

2) **SECULAR EDUCATION.** I am sure all agree that proper education of a secular nature is good and beneficial. However, it is not the work of the church to build, support, or maintain schools or colleges to provide such education. This is the responsibility of the home, rather than the church. Paul acknowledged that there are responsibilities to be fulfilled by individuals, “and let not the church be charged” (1 Tim. 5:16). This could be applied to each of the things discussed in this article.

3) **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.** It is good for brethren to get together and enjoy one another’s association. However, we need to remember: “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?” (1 Cor. 11:22). It is not the work of the church to provide for social meals and gatherings. If we wish to save souls, we must use that which will accomplish such. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). To resort to gimmicks and carnal attractions is not only without authority, but also demonstrates a lack of faith in God and His will.

4) **RECREATION AND ENTERTAINMENT.** Wholesome recreation and entertainment has its place, but it is not the work of the church to provide such. In recent years, it seems that many are more desirous of turning the church into a country club or health spa than “letting the church be the church.” As a result of this thinking, we see churches sponsoring ball teams, building gymnasiums and sponsoring various forms of entertainment. I have received announcements of “clowns for Jesus,” magicians, puppeteers, body builders or singing groups all being used by churches to reach the masses. The one thing lacking in these announcements is the Scripture that would authorize the church to provide such.

Paul tells us that God has provided all that is necessary “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Note the parallel between Ephesians 4:11-12 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The inspired Scriptures are all we need. We need to put our faith in God and His word, and not in the schemes and gimmicks of men that appeal to the flesh.

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