

The Work of the Church

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We know what the work of the church IS NOT. And though our visitors may not always understand what is meant by the wording of such announcements, we should not apologize for making the distinction. But just because we can clearly identify the activities that the church is not organizing or funding does not mean that we understand what the work of the church IS.

There are several figures used in the New Testament to describe the church. They are like parables in that they take an earthly relationship and put it in a spiritual setting. For instance, the church is described as “the temple of God” (1 Cor. 3:16-17) because it involves worship and offering spiritual sacrifices. It is referred to as the “the bride” of Christ (Eph. 5:22,29,32), for we wear the Lord’s name and are to be faithful to Him for life. These metaphors help us understand what the church is and how we relate to it.

As a member of the Lord’s church, what work are you to be about?

The church is a “body” to be built up. The body of Christ consists of one head and many members. These members are given “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). In our Bible classes and worship services, we teach and preach the word of God because it equips us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). A body is meant to grow and develop and mature. Such is the responsibility of each member.

Edification is “building up the Lord’s body.” Can that be accomplished through recreational and social means? Will such activities cause us to be perfected, equipped, and more mature? “Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 14:26) was said in reference to the worship service. The emphasis was on spiritual encouragement, not entertainment. As a part of the body of Christ, you are involved in a work of being equipped and equipping others.

The church is a “kingdom” to be extended. Just as Christ is the head of His body, He is the king of His kingdom. When we are baptized, God adds us to the church, transferring us to the “kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col. 1:13). As citizens, we serve at the command of our King. His will is that His kingdom, which has been firmly established, be extended wherever His subjects are scattered (Acts 8:12).

Evangelism is “spreading the borders of the kingdom.” Jesus announced that His mission was “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Doesn’t it stand to reason that the church Jesus built would have that same spiritual mission? The church in Antioch was equipping men for the work of service (Acts 13:1-3). When the need arose, they sent the workers into the field to preach the gospel. The church is not in the

business of food pantries and clothing drives. We are providing food for the soul, encouraging people to put on Jesus Christ. As a citizen of the kingdom, you are involved in this work of evangelism.

The church is a “household” to be cared for. Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy so that the young preacher would know how to conduct himself “in the household of God, which is the church” (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is not the home, but it does include relationships between family members: brothers and sisters in the Lord. This household is also “the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The duties that accompany this relationship must be carried out according to truth.

Benevolence is seeing to the needs of our family. When a famine was predicted “all over the world,” the church in Antioch sent a contribution “for the relief of the brethren” (Acts 11:29). In Romans 15:25-28, the churches in Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution for the poor “among the saints” in Jerusalem. Someone asks, “Don’t you have compassion for the poor and needy? Don’t you care about people other than your own?” Let the individual assist in such matters and contribute to worthy causes. But in the New Testament, each time the church was involved in benevolence, it was a “collection for the saints” (1 Cor. 16:1). As a member of the household of God, you are involved in a work of serving your fellow brethren when the opportunity arises.

The church is not a building or a place you go. It is a relationship. It involves responsibilities. Let’s remember Who we belong to. And let’s get to work.