

PURPOSE/ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

INTRO

1. Illus: Harpeth Hills church of Christ classes include: How to lose 100 pounds; estate planning; intellectual development of kids; landscaping; interior design.
2. From Jim Bakker's Heritage USA to ACU to Hoover and Palisades c of C there has been a vast expansion of church activities from the spiritual into the secular realm.
3. Among those who once advocated NT Christianity, what began with orphan homes church funding of Christian colleges has mushroomed into multi-million dollar community service complexes.

IS THIS WHAT JESUS DIED FOR, OR ARE WE BEING TOO NARROW-MINDED AND RESTRICTIVE? ARE THERE ANY RULES/REGULATIONS WHATSOEVER WHICH LIMIT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH WHICH JESUS BUILT?

1. The Need For Authority

A. The authority of the Scriptures denied or circumvented.

1. Denominations a long time ago abandoned Biblical authority.
2. "Institutional" brethren of the last generation adopted arguments that allowed them to circumvent the Scriptures:
 - a. Whatever the individual can do, the church can do.
 - b. Variant - Whatever Christ did, His church can do.
 - c. The church is limited in what it can do only by the term "good works" - Gal 6:10 is where the case rests.

B. Establishing a NT pattern:

1. Not a "Church-Work For Dummies" manual. We must collect, analyze and apply all relevant NT passages to the work of the church.
2. Question: What did 1st century church, guided by apostles and prophets, do?

2. Churches In The First Century

A. Preached the gospel - Churches were both the **result** and **cause** of preaching.

1. Local/distant influence - I Th 1:8.
2. Support of individual preachers - Phil 4:15; II Cor 11:8, 9.
3. Local congregations created no network or larger organization to accomplish this herculean task.

B. Edification - The building up of the soul, the promotion of spiritual maturity.

1. Teaching - Eph 4:11-13, various other circumstances (Antioch, Ephesus, Paul's epistles to Timothy concerning the edification of Ephesian church through his evangelistic work, prophets in Corinth, etc.).
2. Worship - Christians were observing the L.S., singing, studying, praying together. Ac 2:42.

C. Benevolence - **Every** example of collective (church) almsgiving mentioned in the NT is to Christians or saints:

1. Ac 4:32 - the multitude of those who believed.
2. Ac 6 - The daily distribution to the widows.
3. Ac 11:27-30 - Relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.
4. I Cor 16:1 - Collection for the saints.
5. Rom 15:25-27, 31 - Contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.
6. II Cor 8:4; 9:1, 12 - Fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

3. The Local Church: Organization Peculiar To Those Related In Christ

- A. God has provided for His people to work together in His name for specific purposes.
- B. The church was not designed as an all-purpose organization, remedying every problem and supplying every need that society has.
- C. The church functions in relation to Christians or making Christians: supporting efforts of Christians to evangelize, promoting their spiritual maturity, and providing the necessities of life when lacking. To go beyond these boundaries is to corrupt the purpose of the church.