

## ***What The Work Of The Church Is NOT***

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.

***- by James Hahn***

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## ***Are You Faithful?***

It was a sunny morning when James stepped outside to get his morning paper. Only a moment later James returned with a disgusted look on his face. No paper! James said, "I'm gonna have to get me a new paper boy. He's just not faithful." The problem was that James' paperboy would deliver about 1 out of every 3 days.

Fred was in a hurry to get to work, but it happened again. His car wouldn't start. He had hoped this used second vehicle would be just what he needed, but about 1 out of every 3 turns of the ignition, the car wouldn't start. Fred told his wife, "I'm gonna have to trade that car in. I just need one that's more faithful."

Are James and Fred right to call the paperboy and the car unfaithful? Would you be pleased with a paperboy who delivered 1 day out of 3? Would you be pleased with a car that only started 2 out of 3 times? Certainly not.

The apostle Paul was chosen by God to carry the gospel because God counted him faithful. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Tim. 1:12). Paul was trustworthy. God could count on him when He needed him. Paul would never fail in his duty to God.

What about me and my attendance to the assemblies of God's people? My brethren are counting on me to be there. I need to consider the impact of my absence upon them. My presence helps to stir up my brothers and sisters to love and good works. Furthermore, I am drawing near to God and holding fast to my faith (Heb. 10:23-25). Am I faithful if I hit one out of every 3 services? Am I faithful if I hit 2 out of 3? Does God consider me reliable and trustworthy? Is he pleased with such performance?

It's something to think about, isn't it? If I wouldn't call the paperboy faithful and the used car faithful then why do I consider myself faithful in my service to God if my performance is no better? All of us need to realize our obligations to God and to our brethren regarding our attendance. We grow weaker through our absence. Someone once compared this to an automobile: "Brethren are often like cars. They "sputter" before they "miss" and they "miss" before they "quit."

- by Jeff May

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### ***"Why Do I Have To Explain Myself To You?"***

When faithful brethren try to encourage and admonish wayward Christians, it is not uncommon for them to respond with bitterness and resentment. Once, as an attempt was being made to restore a person who had fallen away, the angry reply was made: "Why do I have to explain myself to you?! I don't have to give an answer to anyone!" A few observations are in order.

First - in the most absolute and literal sense - the statement is true. No one can be forced to explain his or her actions to anyone else. You are truly at liberty to do as you please. If you do not want to supply information to others, no one can make you do so.

However, it should be pointed out that those who go to the time and trouble to approach such weak and faltering brethren in an effort to restore them are doing so out of sincere love and true concern. They are not simply busybodies who delight in interfering in other people's business. They truly care, and they want to help. In reality, it would be much easier to ignore these situations and let the wayward Christians go off into sin unrestrained and unbothered. But, to do so would be a violation of the duties enjoined by God (Gal. 6:1,2), and it would manifest a total lack of love for the one who has left the Lord (James 5:19,20).

If the erring brother or sister really understood the motivations of those who are trying to restore them, they would not respond bitterly. Rather, they should be thankful that someone loves them and cares enough to reach out with help and support.

Finally, we note that while no one can be compelled to explain their actions to other men, they certainly will be forced to answer before God (2 Cor. 5:10). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), and all who know this (even if they must be reminded from time to time) will be grateful for anything that prepares them for that inevitable judgment (Heb. 9:27).

- by Greg Gwin