

Changing the Mission of the Church

Charles Paul Conn tells of living in Atlanta several years ago. He'd noticed a listing in the Yellow Pages for a restaurant called Church of God Grill. Out of curiosity he dialed the number. Conn recalls the phone conversation as follows:

A man answered with a cheery, "Hello! Church of God Grill!" I asked how his restaurant had been given such an unusual name, and he told me: "Well, we had a little mission down here, and we started selling chicken dinners after church on Sunday to help pay the bills. Well, people liked the chicken, and we did such a good business, that eventually we cut back on the church service. After a while we just closed down the church altogether and kept on serving the chicken dinners. We kept the name we started with, and that's Church of God Grill."

While this may be an extreme example, the Church of God Grill is not much different from what a lot of other churches have done in drifting away from God's purpose for the church. Examples could be multiplied of churches that are mainly in the business of providing day care, or health care, or shelter for the homeless, or recreation for their members, or civic service for their community. Apparently, many (if not most) think that it is the mission of the church to meet every real and perceived human need and desire - that somehow Christ died so we can have a basketball team, potluck dinners and a Christian singles dating service.

If we just took the Scriptures and tried to determine what the purpose and mission of the church is, what conclusion would we reach? Notice what the church did or was to do in the following passages:

The church supported the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15 speaks of "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The church spread the gospel. To the church at Thessalonica Paul wrote, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything" (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

The church supported preachers to preach the gospel. The apostle Paul commended the Philippian church in Philippians 4:15-16: "Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." Elsewhere he said that he took "wages" from churches to minister the gospel (2 Corinthians 11:8).

The church edified itself (built itself up) through worship and teaching. Ephesians 4:15-16 informs us that when members speak the "truth in love" and do their part in the work, it "causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." When it comes to the worship assembly, Paul commands in 1 Corinthians 14:26 "Let all things be done for edification." Notice that he didn't mention anything being done for entertainment!

The church helped truly needy saints. Clearly the New Testament church was not the worldwide relief organization that modern men have made their churches out to be. The church helped some of its own needy (cf. Romans 15:26), but it was not charged with the mission of helping even all of them. In 1 Timothy 5:16, the Scripture says, "If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows."

Can we not see that the church has a mission that is spiritual? Her purpose has been determined by the One who built her and gave His life for her! Making money by selling chicken dinners may be a fine endeavor for an individual to take on, but it is NOT the mission of the church! May the path of the church here at New Georgia ever be guided by the question, "Is this what God wants us to do?"

- by Steve Klein

Why God Matters

Does God matter? Some behave as though He does not; living their own way. They curse, drink, gossip, lie, cheat, steal, or commit fornication. To them, God does not matter. However, logic and the Bible teach that God does matter.

God matters because He is the Creator. He made all things through His Son (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:16, 17). Being the Creator, He is superior to the creature, man (Gen. 1:26, 27). He gave man life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:25). He is not only the giver of life, but the sustainer as well (Heb. 1:2; Acts 14:17). He matters.

God matters because He is the Judge. God is the giver of the law of Christ (Jn. 16:7-15). All men will stand before God and be judged by Jesus Christ according to His law (2 Cor. 5:10; Jn. 5:22; 12:48). Hence, God matters.

God matters because He is God. The very nature of God demands the conclusion that He is relevant. God is the Almighty (Gen. 17:1). He knows all things and with Him all things are possible (Psa. 139:7-12; Heb. 4:13; Mk. 14:36). He is self-existent and eternal (Ex. 3:14; Psa. 90:2). The President of the United States matters because he is the president. The CEO of a company matters to people in the company because he is the CEO. The God of the universe matters because He is God.

- by Steven F. Deaton

If It Was Up To You, Would The Church Close Its Doors?

Every year hundreds of new businesses are started here in our community. The Chamber of Commerce gladly reports on these new ventures in an effort to demonstrate that our local economy is healthy and growing. What they don't report quite so openly is that nearly an equal number of businesses close their doors each year. Why do these businesses fail? It's really very simple. They just do not offer services or sell products that appeal to a sufficient number of customers. In short, they go out of business because the buying public is generally apathetic about their continued existence.

Whether we realize it or not, we're giving our vote as to whether these businesses succeed or fail. We do it when we make the choice to patronize a particular business or to trade elsewhere.

We wonder if certain church members realize that a similar situation exists in local congregations. Some folks show an apparent apathy towards the continued existence of the church. They may attend occasionally - perhaps even most Sunday mornings. However, it is just 'too hard' for them to make the Bible study hour and they never return on Sunday evening. Wednesday night assemblies are absolutely out of the question - they're entirely too busy, too tired, etc.

What these folks are doing, whether they know it or not, is giving their vote to "close the doors". If it was left up to them, no one would assemble and no work would be done. Are you one of these people who are trying to put the church out of business? Think about it!

- by Greg Gwin