

# Bible Thoughts

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## The Work Of The Church

The work of the church (collectively of a local congregation) has been corrupted by our religious world. Many religious organizations have changed the mission of the church from spiritual to social. Their focus is geared to items such as social aid programs, day care centers, secular education, social activities for the young and old, etc. Food and fun is often the means by which many churches attract new people. The justification often used for these activities as a work of the church is expressed by the statement, "It is a good work." **BUT**, an activity of a local church (in its collective capacity) cannot be considered a "good work" when it changes the New Testament pattern. (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:13) The scriptures clearly reveal **God's disapproval of going beyond His pattern as illustrated in both the Old and New Testament**. (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:22-23, Proverbs 16:25, Matthew 15:8-9, Galatians 1:8-10 and 2<sup>nd</sup> John 9) Therefore, the work of the church in its collective capacity must be according to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3, Romans 10:17, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17) Any work that is practiced by a church that is not authorized by the New Testament is not of faith and therefore must be rejected. The work of the church can be broken down into three areas – evangelism, edification and the benevolence of needy saints. Listed below is a brief description of each.

## Evangelism

The church is to be the pillar and ground of truth. (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:15) Truth is revealed in the word of God, the gospel. (John 17:17) We learn that the gospel is God's power to salvation. (Romans 1:16) Therefore, each congregation is required to proclaim the gospel to the best of her ability.

(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:7-10, Acts 13:1-5 and

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:14) The church must not resort to gimmicks in reaching others but rather proclaim the gospel in its purity to lost souls. It must also be remembered that no church became the central funding headquarters for other churches in the matter of support for preachers. (Philippians 4:15-16 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:8)

## Edification

Paul states, "**From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**" (Ephesians 4:16) **Thayer's Greek English Lexicon** defines the word "edify" as, "*the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness and happiness.*" (page 440 #3619) The process by which the church is edified is through the word of God. (Acts 20:32) The assembling of the saints for bible classes and worship services are a means by which the church is edified. The writer of the book of Hebrews states, "**And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**" (Hebrews 10:24-25) Let us remember that the church's work of edification is spiritual, not social in nature. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:22) This spiritual focus is designed to make the child of God complete in his or her service for the Lord. (1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:3, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:13, Titus 2:11-15 and Hebrews 13:20-22)

## Benevolence Of Needy Saints

The work of benevolence concerning the collective church is limited to the needy saints. A study of the New Testament teaches that each congregation was to take care of their own needy. (Acts 2:43-45, Acts 4:32-35, Acts 6:1-6 and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:16) When a need arose beyond the ability of the local congregation, another congregation or congregations assisted to relieve the need. (Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-31, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:1 thru 9:15) It should be noted that a congregation did not create a need in order to solicit assistance from other congregations, nor was there a congregation who designated itself as the collective and distributing agency of funds from other congregations. We must be diligent to maintain the autonomy of each local congregation.

## Conclusion

The church can accomplish the work that has been given to her as taught within the scriptures. It is important that each member functions to the best of his or her ability according to the teachings of the New Testament. Remember, "**To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**" (Ephesians 3:21)

Are **YOU** an active member of the New Testament church which was purchased with the precious blood of Christ? (Acts 20:28)

\* \* \* \* Chuck Kozens

### The Church --- In Ephesians

The church was in God's eternal purpose.

**Ephesians 3:10-11**

Jesus is the Head of the church which is His body.

**Ephesians 1:22-23**

Jesus is the Savior of the body which is the church.

**Ephesians 5:23**

God is glorified in the church by Christ Jesus.

**Ephesians 3:21**

