

What is the Work of the Church?

Concerning First Principles

Some Facts About the Church

- ✓ Defined - The church is the body of the saved
- ✓ The church was part of God's eternal plan - **Ephesians 3:10-11**
- ✓ Christ is the head of the church - **Ephesians 1:22-23**

Some Facts About the Church

- ✓ Church is used in 2 senses
 - Universal - the body of all who are saved, irrespective of time (**cf. Revelation 14:13**)
 - Local - A body of the saved who join together in a given location to do the collective work God has assigned us to do
- ✓ **Both are part of God's eternal plan!**

Some Facts About the Church

- ✓ Each local church is
 - Independent - its own entity with no earthly headquarters joining together a union of churches
 - Autonomous - self-governing. Its leaders are limited to the local work (**cf. Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2, etc.**)
- ✓ God wants us to be part of a local church!

Some Facts About the Church

- ✓ To understand the work of the church we need to properly understand authority (i.e. permission to act). We cannot improve upon God's plan
- ✓ The church local has works to do - our lesson today

What the work of the church is NOT:

- Entertainment based
Luke 19:10, Romans 14:17
- To relieve social ills -
Mark 14:7
- To provide daycare or secular education - **1 Timothy 3:15**
- A political activist organization -
cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

What the work of the church is **NOT**:

- **NOTE:** While the above are good works, they are **NOT** found in scripture as part of the work of a church.
 - Many of these works are addressed (at least in principle) to the work of the individual Christian.

What is the work of the church?

To evangelize

- The great commission -
Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-48
- Our goal as Christians is to get to heaven. For this we need the gospel - **Romans 1:16-17, 10:14-17, James 1:21**
- While spreading the gospel was carried out by individuals, churches were also part of this work

What is the work of the church?

To evangelize

- Local churches proclaimed the word - **1 Thessalonians 1:8**
- The book of Acts shows individuals and churches both engaged in reaching the lost
- The very idea of an evangelist is heralding the gospel - churches had/supported evangelists & preachers - **Acts 21:8, 1 Timothy 1:3**

What is the work of the church?

To evangelize

- **1 Corinthians 14:22-25** – unbelievers in the assembly being taught
- When we assemble together and hear the gospel preached we are evangelizing - both teaching and strengthening

What is the work of the church?

To evangelize

- **Philippians 1:5, 4:15-17, cf. 2 Corinthians 11:8** – churches supported preachers as they preached the gospel
- The survival of the church depends on the gospel being preached to the lost
 - That is why we engage in efforts to share the word - gospel meetings, tracts, website, YouTube, etc.

What is the work of the church?

To evangelize

- Also note that they did this without forming any human organizations (e.g. missionary societies) or surrendering their autonomy (“farming out” their work to another congregation, e.g. “sponsoring churches”, etc.)

What is the work of the church?

To build up the saints spiritually

- “Edify” means to build up. In the NT, it ALWAYS has a spiritual connotation - grounding the saints in God’s word
- **Ephesians 4:11-16**
1 Timothy 1:4 - Timothy in Ephesus to teach
1 Corinthians 14:4ff - 7x edify/edification is mentioned. Addresses assembling to worship

What is the work of the church?

To build up the saints spiritually

- It was never about entertainment or social gatherings
Acts 2:46 - we DO find social gatherings, but they are distinguished from the church and its work
- Edification is a product of worship

What is the work of the church?

To worship God

- Sometimes included under the heading of edification, but I see worship as more than that
- Worship is always **FIRST** about God and Jesus.

What is the work of the church?

To worship God

- Churches assemble to worship God -
Hebrews 10:24-25, Acts 20:7 -
Includes: **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** - the Lord's Supper
- always a collective action
1 Corinthians 16:1-2 - collection
when we assemble
Ephesians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 14:15 - singing and praying;
Acts 20:7 - preaching

What is the work of the church?

To worship God

- Glory belongs to God “in the churches by Christ Jesus”-
Ephesians 3:20-21
- **John 4:24** – we worship “in spirit and in truth”. To be pleasing to God, we **MUST** follow His pattern in every act of worship. It has **ALWAYS** been that way.
- True worship is not entertainment focused

What is the work of the church?

She can relieve needy saints

- Benevolence IS a work of the church. BUT its recipients are limited
- **1 Timothy 5:3-16** - Paul addresses “widows indeed”
- Acts 6:1-4** - 7 appointed to assist “Hellenist” widows

What is the work of the church?

She can relieve needy saints

- We also find churches helping other congregations where there is a need

- **Acts 11:27-30** - saints in Judea

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (2 Cor. 8:1-5ff, 9:6-13, Romans 15:25-26ff, etc. - brethren in Jerusalem

What is the work of the church?

She can relieve needy saints

- Again, we find a clear pattern:
 - That respects autonomy and independence - they chose who and how funds were sent
 - Sent directly where need was
 - It was ALWAYS temporary
 - No super organizations or “sponsoring churches” created for the need

What is the work of the church?

She can relieve needy saints

- Again, we find a clear pattern:
 - NO passage or authority for general benevolence (relieving the needy of society)
 - Benevolence NOT used as a tool for evangelism
 - Should we be concerned about the poor? Absolutely - **James 1:27, 1 John 3:17-18, Matthew 25:31-46**. But these passages are directed toward individuals (**cf. 1 Timothy 5:16**)

What is the work of the church?

She can relieve needy saints

- Far too many today see the church as primarily about societal relief. The gospel is relegated to 2nd place or below.
 - In many instances, society **EXPECTS** churches to give to needy causes while mocking, rejecting or even attacking their Biblical teachings.

**Are we striving to be
the church we read
about in the Bible?**

Let us pray!