

A Study of the Local Church
Lesson 4 – The Work of a Local Church
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Introduction: Will we let Jesus be Lord over local churches?

- A. Because Jesus is Lord we must strictly let Him tell us the nature and function of the local church. **(Lk 6:46)**
 - 1. We are to be a people that respect God’s authority just as Jesus respected the Father’s authority. **(Jn 14:10-11, 20-21)**
 - 2. This submission is a product of knowing God and recognizing that “all things” that we are to do has been delivered through a revealed message. **(Jn 17:6-8)**
 - 3. It is this attitude that calls us out of the world and causes the world to hate us. **(Jn 17:6, 14-17)**
 - 4. Sadly you will be attacked by worldly brethren also!
- B. In most places the world has overtaken churches that once stood against the world. How do local churches make their decisions?
 - 1. There are three basic “standards” of the morality of the world. (Note: when any of these are the goal you can lie, cheat, etc.. as long as you meet the goal!)
 - a. What will work? **(Utilitarian practicality)**
 - b. What do most people accept? **(Majority rule)**
 - c. Who has the strength to impose their will on everyone else? **(Power Politics)**

“The church which is married to the Spirit of its Age will be a widow in the next.”
—William Ralph Inge (The Cultural Church F. LaGard Smith p. 75)

- 2. Those churches that “know God” will *always ask for authority*, that is give book, chapter and verse, to stay within “every good work” that has been provided by the Lord. **(2 Tim 3:16-17)**

I. We need to take all God has said about local churches and stay within what is revealed

- A. We are dealing with what a *local church* may do. This requires that the local church be addressed in the context of a passage before *assuming* church responsibility.
 - 1. Again what the individual Christian may do is not under consideration!
 - 2. This means *collective* action and not *individual* action.
 - 3. Many have made the mistake that if a local church cannot do a certain work then the work will not be done. This is why local churches are increasing becoming involved in things that should be left to families. (Ex. Recreational activities)
 - 4. The bulk of the Lord’s work is done by individuals. You cannot fulfill your work as a Christian by proxy.
- B. The work of the church involves *that which is authorized* by scripture.
 - 1. Did the Lord provide sufficient instructions to guide us in our collective work? **(Jude 3; 2 Tim 3:16-17)**

2. Remember the gospel was spread to the whole world under the arrangements God authorized for the church in the first century. **(Col 1:23)**
3. A previous generation wanted to apply Bible authority to the worship of the local church (instrumental music) but not to the work of the local church.
- C. The work of the church involves *the use of its resources* for the work.
 1. God has authorized a collection for the work of the local church. **(1 Cor 16:1-2)**
 2. The resources of the local church constitute the treasury and those things purchased from the treasury that are overseen by the church.
 3. This would include the building or other things purchased from the treasury.
- D. The work of the church involves that *which is wholly its work*.
 1. Only that which is authorized may be done with God's approval. To mix that which is authorized in with things that are not authorized is in effect is a substitution for what God has said.
 2. For example, playing baseball is not authorized wider passages that instruct us to preach the gospel. Someone may preach while the game is being played, but playing baseball and preaching the gospel are *two separate activities!*
 3. Remember that false doctrine is most effective when combined with a high percentage of truth. Just because something is 95% correct will make it true.
- E. How did God choose to equip His people? **(Eph 4:11-12)**
 1. It is easy to become sidetracked on things that appeal to our flesh but in the end do nothing for the work of God.
 2. All apostasy can be traced to this desire of God's people to satisfy themselves. **(2 Tim 4:2-4)**
 3. Be prepared! You will be in for a fight with those who close their Bibles! **(Rom 8:5-8; Jer 6:16-17)**
 4. When we close our Bibles it is easy to be comfortable with the things we have always done. Also when one generation adds things having no Bible authority, the next generation will go much further.
 5. In time we will be indistinguishable from the churches of the world.

III. What is the work of the local church in evangelism?

- A. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the preaching of God's word. **(Phil 4:15-16; 2 Cor 11:8)**
 1. God's word will not return unto Him void. Will you believe it? **(Isa 55:11)**
 2. Remember Bible authority may be placed under Two categories: general authority and specific authority.
 - a. *General authority* includes all things necessary to fulfilling a command or authorized action. Here we find that there are things authorized by God which may not be specifically named.
 - b. *Specific authority* means that God has specified a particular thing to be done. When God specifies then we must not substitute!
- B. A church has several choices under general authority. They could pay a preacher, buy tracts, have a radio or TV program, conduct a gospel meeting, or publish ads in the newspaper as long as the gospel alone is preached.

C. There are things these verses do not authorize:

1. Some other activity

- a. False doctrine is not authorized.
- b. Political campaigns are not authorized.
- c. Recreation is not authorized. (Example: How would a Ping-Pong table be considered as an aid to preaching the gospel?)

2. Violation of other scriptural principles

- a. The local church would not use an arrangement like the missionary society. Why? Because of what the Bible teaches about the organization of a local church. (We will study this in lesson 4)
- b. We are not to substitute for the drawing power of the gospel by an appeal to the flesh. (**Jn 6:44-45; 26-27, Rom 1:16-17**)

IV. What is the work of the local church in edification?

A. To edify means to build up.

1. Edification is the receiving of God's word into our hearts. (**Acts 20:32**)
2. Even with individual work there is no substitute for God's word. (**Eph 4:15-16**)

B. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the edifying of its members. (**Acts 9:31; 1 Cor 14:26**)

C. A church has several choices under general authority. They could have Bible classes, distribute printed material, use an overhead projector, publish a church bulletin as long as this is the teaching of God's word.

1. There are some things required under specific authority! They must have an assembly of the whole church to do certain things. (**1 Cor 14:23; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1-2**)
2. We must have an assembly on the first day of the week.

D. There are things these verses do not authorize:

1. Some other activity

- a. Again, false doctrine is not authorized.
- b. Political campaigns are not authorized.
- c. Recreation is not authorized. (Example: How would a Ping-Pong table be considered as an aid to edifying Christians?)
- d. Social functions are not authorized such as "fellowship" halls, church parties, church camps.

2. Violation of other scriptural principles

- a. If the Bible classes were made into their own separate functional body.
- b. Women preachers would be a violation of **1 Cor 14:33-34**.

V. What is the work of the local church in relieving needy member?

A. God has authorized local churches to be involved in the relief of its members. (**Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6; 11:27-30; Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 9:12-14**)

1. Remember that we are considering the collective work of the local church. Let us not conclude that because a local church is limited in its work that the work cannot be done or will not be done by the individual!

2. When you take all the verses together, what is authorized?
- B. A church has several choices under general authority. They could buy or rent a building, provide caregivers, buy services of a hospital or nursing facility.
(Acts 6:1-7)
- C. There are things these verses do not authorize:
 1. **Some other activity**
 - a. Recreation is not authorized. (Example: How would a Ping-Pong table be considered as an aid to reliving a needy Christian?)
 - b. A business arrangement.
 2. **Violation of other scriptural principles**
 - a. Use of another organization.
 - b. Church hospitals, church business...

Conclusion: Let the local church be the local church!

- A. When a serious attempt is made to apply Bible authority to the local church it is not difficult to see the great work it has been given.
- B. When one generation refuses to apply Bible authority to the work and organization of a local church, then it is not surprising to see the next generation reject the application of Bible authority in its entirety!