

A Study of the Local Church
Lesson 3- The Work God Gave the Local Church
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Introduction: Let us review our previous studies.

- A. We must have Bible authority for *everything* we do. **(Col 3:17)**
 - 1. This means giving *book, chapter and verse* for our practices!
 - a. Any practice for which we cannot give scripture should be given up.
 - b. We will always first give the scripture and show how a practice is authorized when our practice is called into question,
 - 2. Bible authority is established in three ways; *command, approved example, and inescapable conclusion*.
 - 3. 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. There is a difference in the work of an individual Christian and a local church.
 - 1. There are three things necessary to establish a local church.
 - a. There is an agreement to work and worship together as a local church. **(Heb 13:17)**
 - b. There is a common oversight. **(1 Pt 5:1-2)**
 - c. There is a pooling of resources. **(1 Cor 16:1-2)**
 - 2. This requires that the local church be addressed in the context of a passage before *assuming* church responsibility.
 - 3. If a scripture addresses only the individual Christian this would not be enough to authorize church action.

I. Defining the terms of our study

- A. We are dealing with what a *local church* may do.
 - 1. Again what the individual Christian may do is not under consideration!
 - 2. This means *collective* action and not *individual* action.
- 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)**
- C. The church may use its **resources** for that which it is authorized to do.
 - 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 church may do only 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.

II. God has called His people forth for a great work.

- A. How did God choose to equip His people? **(Eph 4:11-12)**
- B. It is easy to become sidetracked on things that appeal to our flesh but in the end do nothing for the work of God.
 1. All apostasy can be traced to this desire of God's people to satisfy themselves. **(2 Tim 4:2-4)**
 2. Please notice that the only thing that can pull God's people away from the flesh is the word of God.
 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.
- C. When you examine all the verses on the work of a local church, you will find a threefold work; Evangelism to the lost, Edification of its members, and relief of its members.

III. 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. Let us focus upon God's wisdom and ways to produce the fruits God will honor.
 2. **(Isa 55:11)** - God's word will not return unto Him void. Will you believe it?
- 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, publish ads in the newspaper...

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. The work of the local church in edification

A. To edify means to build up.

- 1. (**Acts 20:32**) - Only the application of God's word will build up Christians.
- 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...

- 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.

C. 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**.

IV. The work of the local church in relieving needy members

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 church is limited in its work that the work 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 relieving a needy Christian?)

b. A business arrangement.

2. **Violation of other scriptural principles**

a. Use of another organization.

b. Church hospitals, etc..