

LESSON 12 – THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

1) INTRODUCTION

- a) What is the work of the church?
 - i) In other words, what is a church supposed to be active in doing in this world and in our community?
 - ii) Are we free to involve the church in whatever work we see fit or does God lay out a pattern for the work of the church?
 - iii) I certainly hope that we've learned at this point that God has never accepted man operating according to his own desire and judgment
 - iv) If **2 Tim 3:16-17** is right in that scripture is designed to provide us with everything to equip for us for every good work, than certainly the work of the church will have a divine pattern attached to it
- b) But before we study this pattern, it would help us to be reminded of the difference between God's universal church and God's local church
 - i) The church universal has no earthly organization in which to do its work; what work it does is done as individuals who live and work in the world
 - ii) The church local does have an earthly organization, and as such is capable of some sort of corporate (as opposed to individual) work
 - iii) And so this lesson focuses on the work of the local church
- c) The work of the church can be gleaned in some respects from what is revealed about the organization and worship of the church
 - i) The reason for this is that the Lord organized His church to effectively carry out its work
 - ii) And the worship ordained would certainly complement the church in its work
 - iii) In other words, when we look at the organization and worship of the church, we begin to understand a little bit about the work of the church
 - iv) With that in mind, we'll turn our attention to what scripture reveals a local church is supposed to do (what it's work is)

2) EDIFICATION

- a) The primary work of a local church is edification. Edification means to build up and encourage one another to be better Christians
 - i) What is interesting about this is that this specific work of edifying can be seen in studying about church organization, specifically as it concerns the responsibilities of elders

Question 1: Read **Acts 20:28** and **1 Pet 5:1-2**. What were the elders to do for the church?

- ii) Whenever elders carry out these responsibilities, a church will be edified and lifted up
- iii) Even in the activities of worship, we can see that God's plan for these activities was for members of the local church to be edified

Question 2: Read **Col 3:16** and **Eph 5:18-19**. What is the purpose of singing?

- iv) There are many passages in scripture which teach about the importance of edifying one another, but perhaps none more powerful than that found in **Eph 4:11-16**

Question 3: Study **Eph 4:11-16**. Why did God give some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors, etc? When each member does its part, what will the result be?

- v) This being the case, in order for to fulfill our responsibilities as Christians, we must edify our brethren. And we can not edify our brethren if we do not attend church regularly
- vi) In fact, we cannot edify our brethren unless we attend regularly and get to know our brethren on an intimate level

Question 4: Read **Heb 10:24-25**. What are we supposed to “consider” at our local churches? What specifically does vs. 25 teach that we must not do?

- vii) The primary work of a local church is to edify and build one another, to help in spiritually developing one another. We must be present regularly to fulfill this duty

3) **BENEVOLENCE**

- a) Benevolence means to provide materially for needy saints. This is another work that God has ordained churches to be involved in

Question 5: Read **Acts 4:32-37; 11:27-30; Rom 15:25-26**. What were the churches of the 1st century regularly involved in?

- i) Whenever brethren were suffering financially, other brethren in other areas were quick to send relief
- ii) And again, what we learn is that the church’s organization and worship accommodated this work of benevolence
- iii) In **1 Tim 3:8-13**, we read that deacons were appointed and they were to serve the church under the leadership of the elders
- iv) If Acts 6 is a prototype of the work of deacons, than we could say that part of the deacons work was to organize the help and support of widowed members and other needy members
- v) In **1 Cor 16:1-2**, we learned from our study about worship that we are to lay by in store from what we’ve prospered in order to care for needy saints
- vi) But as important as this work of benevolence is, the bible does place limitations on whom the church, as a collective body, can provide monetary and material assistance to

Question 6: Read **1 Tim 5:3-16**. According to vs. 16, should the church provide for a widow if she has believing family members? What are other conditions for her to be put “on the list” or for her to be a “widow indeed”?

- vii) The necessary implication from this is that there are limitations to a church’s benevolent work. Certain conditions must be met first before taking from the church collection to provide for a widow
- viii) In fact, the bible also teaches that church benevolence was limited to needy saints, as opposed to just any person coming in off the street. In that case, it is an individual’s responsibility to help someone, not the church’s responsibly
- ix) The reason we know this is because every single passage in the NT teaches that benevolence was given to needy saints - **Ro 15:25-26; 1 Co 16:1-2; 2 Co 8:1-4; 9:1**
- x) But again, so there be no confusion, individual Christians are expected to be "good Samaritans" and help those in the world as they have opportunity and ability

4) ***EVANGELISM***

- a) A study of the NT will show that local churches were heavily involved in collective evangelism

Question 7: Read **Acts 13:1-3**. Who sent Paul and Barnabas away to preach?

Question 8: Read **2 Cor 11:8-9**. Who supported Paul monetarily in his preaching?

- i) Remember that in our study of Eph 4, one of the gifts God gave to the church was that of “Evangelists”
- ii) The purpose of evangelists is not just in evangelism, but in also helping the members of local churches to become evangelistic

Question 9: Read **Matt 28:19-20**. After making disciples, what were they to be taught?
