

# Can A Church Offer Too Much?

By Rodney Pitts

**Can a church offer too much?** Strange question? Maybe. Yet, with churches today seeking to draw people through an endless variety of amenities and services ranging from coffee shops to gymnasiums, musical bands to financial classes, it is a *reasonable* question. Can it be that in the rush to meet the wants and needs of everyone that the real purpose of Christ and His church is getting lost in the shuffle? We think so.

**Why did Jesus come to earth?** It seems that fewer and fewer people are looking in the bible to find the answer to this question. Yet, Jesus presented the answer in plain words saying, "...the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus' work was about saving souls. So, it is not surprising that He *sternly rebuked* those who followed Him for reasons other than their soul's salvation saying, "...Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the **signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled**. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you..." (John 6:26-27, all emp. mine, rp). Unfortunately, few churches today understand the implications of these words, seeing it has become common practice for churches to motivate people to "come to Jesus" by appealing to the very same fleshly desires that Jesus condemned.

**What is the purpose of the local church?** Because Christ's purpose is to save souls, it is not surprising that the New Testament teaches us that the local church's purpose is to save souls. This purpose is to be carried out in two ways. First, there is the work of assuring the salvation of Christians through worship of God, instruction in the word, and discipline (Acts 20:7; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 5). Second, local churches belonging to Christ are to seek and save lost souls through preaching the gospel (Philippians 4:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8). With the addition of some limited acts of benevolence, this is the sum total of the work that God has given the local church to do.

With this in mind, for churches to add the use of carnal weapons, or weapons that appeal to the flesh, in attempting to win the spiritual battle for the souls of men carries little logic and contradicts the teaching of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Paul writes, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the **weapons of our warfare are not carnal** but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments** and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**." Think about the message of this verse. Food, fun, and social programs cannot cast down arguments and bring every thought into obedience to Christ. Only the gospel can do that! So, if churches are going to appeal to the world and their members through food, social activities, and entertainment, how can they possibly say that the "weapons of *their* warfare are not carnal"?

Now, I realize that for most people in today's society the thoughts I have presented may seem odd or out of sync with modern life, which is no wonder considering the fact that "church" has become synonymous with all the things we have mentioned above. But, I must ask why has it become so strange to just go back to the ways of the New Testament church, to seek to believe what Christians in the bible were told to believe, and do what they were to do in service to Christ? Has the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation to all who will believe (Rom. 1:16), become so weak and ineffectual that we must resort to games and gadgets of our own devising to "save" the world? Have we truly moved beyond the wisdom of God who "it pleased...through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21)? I do not think so.

If you desire the simple way of Jesus and would like to be a part of a church that focuses on Christ and the salvation of your soul, there is hope. The church of Christ at Colonial Height in Cookeville, TN, would like to help do just that. We hope that you will take the opportunity to visit with us, learn of Christ, and be encouraged by the message of the gospel.