

# THE WORK OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

## Outline for "First Principles Class"

Given by Larry Powers

[www.oabs.org](http://www.oabs.org)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. How many like to work?
2. Jesus came to work the works of the Father (John 9:4).
3. Jesus expects His followers to work.
4. What does it mean to work?
  - a. One word (ergad'zomai) which is translated work is found 39 times in the New Testament
    - 1) This word means "to work, labor (Matt. 21:28; Luke 13:14; Acts 18:3; I Cor. 4:12; I Thess. 2:9; etc.), to perform (wrought Matt. 26:10; John 3:21; 6:28; 9:4); to be employed in or about (I Cor. 9:13; Rev. 18:17); procure, acquire by labor (Matt. 25:16; John 6:27).
    - 2) This word is translated **work** 22 times; **wrought** 7 times; **do** 3 times, **labour for** one time, and **labour** one time.
  - b. Another word (er'gon) which is translated work is found 176 times in the New Testament.
    - 1) This word means "work, performance, the result or object of employment, making or working."
    - 2) This word is translated **work** 152 times, **deed** 22 times, **doing** one time and **labour** one time.
5. A working church is the only kind of church that is pleasing to the Lord.
6. If we are to be pleasing to the Lord, we need to answer questions concerning who is to work, what is the work, when should the work be done, where this work is to be accomplished, why must one work, and how must the work be accomplished?

### I. WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE CHURCH?

- A. The work of the church in preparing people for heaven involves evangelism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16).
  1. The word evangelism is not found in the Bible, but the word evangelist is found three times (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; II Tim. 4:5).
    - a. An evangelist was one who preached the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 10:15).
    - b. The word (euangelid'zo) which is translated to preach the gospel is found 55 times in the New Testament.
      - 1) This word means "to evangelize, proclaim the good news, almost always concerning the Son of God as declared in the Gospel (exceptions: Lk. 1:19; 1 Thess. 3:6; Gal. 1:8). Used in the active voice to declare, proclaim (Rev. 10:7; 14:6); in the passive voice, euaggelizomai, of matters to be proclaimed as glad tidings (Lk. 16:16; Gal. 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:25), of persons as to whom the proclamation is made (Matt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22; Heb. 4:2,6; 1 Pet. 4:6); in the mid. Voice especially of the message of salvation with personal objective either of the person preached (Acts 5:42; 11:20; Gal. 1:16), or with a prep. of the persons evangelized (Acts 8:4,12; 13:32; 15:35; 1 Cor. 15:1; II Cor. 11:7; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 2:17; 3:8)" (The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 1692).
      - 2) This word is translated **preach** 23 times (Luke 3:18; 4:43; 16:16; Acts 5:42; 8:4,12,35,40; 10:36; 11:20; 14:15; 15:35; 17:18; I Cor. 15:1,2; II Cor. 11:7;

Gal. 1:8b,16,23; Eph. 2:17; 3:8; Heb. 4:6; Rev. 14:6), **preach the Gospel** 22 times (Matt. 11:5; Luke 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; 20:1; Acts 8:25; 14:21; 16:10; Rom. 1:15; 10:15a; 15:20; I Cor. 1:17; 9:16,16,18; II Cor. 10:16; Gal. 1:8a,9; 4:13; Heb. 4:2; I Pet. 1:12; 4:6), **bring good tidings** 2 times (Luke 2:10; I Thess. 3:6), **shew glad tidings** 2 times (Luke 1:19; 8:1), **bring glad tidings** (Rom. 10:15b), **declare** (Rev. 10:7), **declare glad tidings** (Acts 13:32), **preached the gospel** (Acts 14:7), **be preached** (Gal. 1:11), **be preached by the gospel** (I Pet. 1:25).

2. The only way the church can evangelize the world is to preach and teach the gospel of Christ.

B. The work of the church in preparing people for heaven involves edification (I Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:12).

1. The word (oikodome) which is translated edification is found 18 times in the New Testament.

- a. This word means “to build, literally the act of building, building as a process and, hence also that which is built, the building. N.T. meanings: a building, edifice (Mt. 24:1; Mk. 13:1,2, cf. I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 5:1; Eph. 2:21); edification spiritual profit or advancement (Rom. 14:19; 15:2; I Cor. 14:3,4; II Cor. 13:10).”

- b. This word is translated **edification** 4 times (Rom. 15:2; I Cor. 14:3; II Cor. 10:8; 13:10), **edifying** 7 times (I Cor. 14:5,12,26; II Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12,16,29), **building** 6 times (Mt. 24:1; Mk. 13:1,2; I Cor. 3:9; II Cor. 5:1; Eph. 2:21), **wherewith (one) may edify** (Rom. 14:19).

2. Another word (oikodome’o) which is translated edify is found 39 times in the New Testament.

- a. This word means “To build a house, tower, town, etc. (Mt. 7:24,26); to build in a spiritual sense, as the Church (Matt. 16:18); to profit spiritually, to edify (I Cor. 8:1; 14:4,17).”

- b. This word is translated edify 7 times (Acts 9:31; I Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:4,4,17; I Thess. 5:11), build 24 times, builder 5 times, build up (I Peter 2:5), be in building (John 2:20) and embolden (I Cor. 8:10).

- c. Another word (oikodomi’a) which is translated edifying is found only one time in the New Testament (I Tim. 1:4) and means the “act of building...the increase which God desires in faith).

3. Edification is an essential work of the church.

- a. Christian growth is a theme that runs throughout the New Testament (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18).

- b. Christians are warned to be sober, steadfast, and strong (I Peter 5:8,9; Eph. 6:10).

- c. Paul said, “...let all things be done unto edifying” (I Cor. 14:26).

- d. Edification begins where evangelism ends.

- e. Edification begins with education, study (II Tim. 2:15).

C. The work of the church in preparing people for heaven involves benevolence. (I Tim. 5:16; Acts 6:1-6; Gal. 2:10).

1. The word (eu’noia) which is translated benevolence is found only two times in the New Testament (I Cor. 7:3 - benevolence and Eph. 6:7 - good will). This word means “favor, benevolence, good will, kindness.”

2. Paul said that we should remember the poor (Gal. 2:10).

- a. The word (mnemoneu'o) which is translated remember means "to be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind...to think of and feel for a person or thing).
  - b. This word is translated **remember** 19 times (Matt. 16:9; Mark 8:18; Luke 17:32; John 15:20; 16:4,12; Acts 20:31,35; Gal. 2:10; Eph. 2:11; Col. 4:18; I Thess. 1:3; 2:9; II Thess. 2:5; II Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:7; Rev. 2:5; 3:3; 18:5), **be mindful** (Heb. 11:15) and **make mention** (Heb. 11:22).
3. Paul told Timothy that widows should receive relief or be relieved (I Tim. 5:16).
    - a. The word (eparke'o) which is translated relieve means "to aid, give assistance, relieve...to give aid from one's own resources."
    - b. This word is translated relieve three times (I Tim. 5:10,16,16).
  4. James writes that Christians are to visit the fatherless and widows (James 1:27).
    - a. The word (episkep'tomai) which is translated visit means "to look at something, examine closely, inspect, observe, to look upon with mercy, favor, or regard...to look after, take care of or nursing the sick (Matt. 25:36,43; James 1:27); to look accurately or diligently (Acts 6:3).
    - b. This word is translated **visit** 10 times (Matt. 25:36,43; Luke 1:68,78; 7:16; Acts 7:23; 15:14,36; Heb. 2:6; James 1:27) and **look out** (Acts 6:3).

#### D. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH IS NOT:

1. The work of the church is not entertainment.
2. The work of the church is not recreation.

## II. WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH?

- A. Who should be involved in the work of evangelism and who should be evangelized?
  1. Every Christian should be involved in preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16).
  2. Every person who has never heard and obeyed the gospel of Christ needs the gospel of Christ (II Thess. 1:7-9).
- B. Who should be involved in the work of edification and who needs to be edified?
  1. Who should be involved in the work of edification?
    - a. Every member must be involved in edification (Heb. 12:10,13; Eph. 4:16).
      - 1) Notice that unified effort equals edification of the whole body.
      - 2) If one member fails to do his part the whole body suffers (I Cor. 12:25-28).
    - b. The elders are exhorted to be involved in edification (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:3; Heb. 13:17).
    - c. Preachers are commanded to be involved in edification (II Tim. 4:2).
      - 1) Preaching must be balanced.
      - 2) Too much reproof or rebuke is not good.
      - 3) Nor is it good to exhort all the time.
  2. Who needs to be edified?
    - a. New converts need edification.
    - b. Young people need edification (II Tim. 2:22).
    - c. Widows need edification.
    - d. Mature Christians need edification.
      - 1) Elijah the prophet was known for his iron will and stern resolution (I Kings 18).
      - 2) Yet, because of the burden of his task, he sat in discouragement beneath a Juniper tree and wished for death (I Kings 19:1-4).
      - 3) The apostle Paul requested the prayers of the church so that he might speak

the Word boldly (Eph. 6:20).

e. The spiritually weak and wayward need edification (I Thess. 5:14).

f. Elders, deacons, preachers and teachers need edification (Rom. 13:7; I Thess. 5:11-13).

C. Who should be involved in the work of benevolence and who needs help?

1. Every Christian should be involved in the work of benevolence (Gal. 6:10; I John 3:17).

2. Those in need, the weak, the poor, etc. are in need of benevolence (James 1:27; Acts 20:35).

### **III. WHEN IS THE CHURCH TO WORK?**

A. When should the church evangelize?

B. When should the church edify?

C. When should the church be benevolent?

### **IV. WHY IS THE CHURCH TO WORK?**

A. Why should the church be involved in evangelism (Luke 19:10; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Rom. 1:16,17)?

B. Why should the church be involved in edification?

1. Christians growth is a theme that runs throughout the New Testament.

2. From the newest babe in Christ to the most stalwart member continued growth is expected (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18).

3. Christians are warned to be sober because we are in a battle against the devil (I Peter 5:8; Eph. 6:10-17).

C. Why should the church be involved in benevolence?

1. During the time of the Law of Moses benevolence was expected of the Israelites (Lev. 25:35; Deut. 15:7,8; Psa. 41:1; Prov. 14:31).

2. Benevolence characterized the life of our Saviour (Acts 1:1; Acts 10:38; I Peter 2:21).

3. Benevolence will bring glory to the Father (Matt. 5:16).

4. Benevolence will be one of the standards used by the Lord to weigh our lives and judge us (Matt. 25:31-46).

### **V. HOW IS THE CHURCH TO WORK?**

A. How is the church to carry out the work of evangelism?

1. The local church is organized for evangelism.

2. The church is pictured in the New Testament in two ways (universal and local).

a. The universal church is composed of every Christian throughout the whole world over which Jesus Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18).

b. The local church is composed of Christians in a local area meeting and working together according to the authority of Christ.

3. The gospel can be spread throughout the whole world by use of radio, television, internet, or by sending preachers into the world.

4. This work of preaching the gospel is the responsibility of every congregation.

5. Men were selected at Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-7) to wait on tables thus enabling the apostles to continue in prayer and preaching.

6. The church at Antioch made it possible for Paul and Barnabas to go and preach the

- gospel to other areas (Acts 11:19-26).
7. Local churches regularly supported Paul while he was preaching (II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:15,16).
  8. A local congregation can support another congregation with the work of evangelism.
  9. What about a missionary society?
    - a. A missionary society was developed many years ago (1849) to take over the missionary efforts for congregations.
    - b. This was and is an unscriptural organization.
    - c. The missionary society was larger than the local congregation and smaller than the universal church.
    - d. Even though the missionary society was composed of only members of the church that did not make it scriptural.
    - e. The missionary society exists for the purpose of doing the work which gave the church to do.
  10. There is another organization of men attempting to do the work of the church known as “African Christian Schools Foundation” located 2932 Fostrer Creighton, Nashville, Tennessee.
    - a. This foundation is composed of a board of directors.
    - b. The Chief Executive Officer is Larry Mathis and Henry Huffard is the president
    - c. This foundation was founded in 1959.
    - d. What does this organization attempt to do? “As a result of ACSF’s self-study, it was determined that the programs and interests of the organization have grown to the extent that certain aspects of the work need more attention. The CEO will focus on administrative and fund raising tasks in the U.S. while President Huffard will devote more time to recruitment of missionaries and oversight of the expanding programs in Africa” (African Christian Schools Bulletin, Spring, 2001).
  11. God is not glorified in the organizations of men.
  12. When a congregation turns over the work of evangelism to a missionary society, it shirks the work which God required of them.
  13. The local church, congregation, has the machinery and the organization necessary to perform all of the duties involved in the field of evangelism.

B. How is the church to carry out the work of edification?

1. The local church is organized for edification.
2. The local church should be edified by worshipping together (Heb. 10:24,25).
3. The local church should be edified by studying together (II Tim. 2:15).
4. The local church should be edified by practicing discipline
  - a. Sometimes it is necessary to “...root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down” in order to build and plant (Jer. 1:10).
  - b. The apostle Paul warned that “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (I Cor. 5:6).
  - c. The damaging influence of sin must be purged out of the local congregation (I Cor. 5:7).
  - d. One must remember that church discipline is an act of love, carried out for the purpose of saving the sinner’s soul and the purification of the church.
  - e. When all avenues have been exhausted, the sinner must be put away (Gal. 6:1; I Cor. 5:1-7; Titus 3:10; II Thess. 3:14,15).

- C. How is the church to carry out the work of benevolence?
1. The local church is organized to carry out the work of benevolence.
  2. The question is often asked about children's homes? Is the church to support them?
    - a. A children's home is doing the work of the home, it is not attempting to do the work of the church.
    - b. The church is not designed for, nor is it capable of performing the needs of children. It is not its function to:
      - 1) teach secular subjects or manual trades
      - 2) administer discipline
      - 3) provide recreation
    - c. These are the obligations of the home – not the church.
    - d. The church may and must provide financial support from the treasury in support of the fatherless and widows (James 1:27; I Tim. 5:16), but it is the responsibility of the home to engage in the performance of those needs.
    - e. The proper and legitimate actions of the home are not part of the functions of the local congregation. God never intended that the church should serve as a home.
    - f. The church can help a single family in need. The church can help a family who has taken into its mist a needy child. The church can support a home designed to help children who are without parents (either because of death or abandonment).
  3. What about doing the work of benevolence through a benevolent society?
    - a. There is a benevolent society in operation in Nashville, Tennessee.
      - 1) It is called the Disaster Relief ...
      - 2) This society is composed of members of the church from many different congregations, has a board of directors and attempts to do the work of the church.
      - 3) It is unscriptural on the same grounds as the missionary society.
    - b. There is another society known as the "International Health Care Foundation" "A Ministry of the Churches of Christ" 102 N. Locust, Searcy, Arkansas.
      - 1) This foundation was formed in 1965 and was known as African Christian Hospital Foundation.
      - 2) It was formed to help support the work of the Nigerian Christian Hospital.
      - 3) The name was changed in 1998 to International Health Care Foundation (IHCF) to reflect the fact that programs are now sponsored in the Caribbean and South America as well as in Africa.
      - 4) Their stated goal "the primary goals of IHCF have been to promote, support and coordinate medical evangelism among the Churches of Christ."
    - c. There are several other organizations attempting to do the work of the church under the direction of a board of directors.
      - 1) There is the Christian Relief Fund founded in 1971.
      - 2) There is Health Talents International which is a foundation which was organized to promote and support medical missions. This foundation was established in 1973 in Birmingham, Alabama.
      - 3) There is Healing Hands International. This is a non-profit organization which seeks to accomplish its mission through helping congregations of the churches of Christ collect, ship and distribute medications, medical supplies and equipment, agricultural aid, school supplies and when necessary, other times that reduce human suffering. This group is under

the oversight of a board of directors.