**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH**

**INTRODUCTION** - It is no secret that we emphasize respect for God’s word in all that we do, whether we are speaking of the church or as Christians. Today many churches have clouded her true purpose by engaging in all sorts of activities that we find no authority for them in scripture – whether it be “catering to the whole man” with church sponsored recreational activities, social programs, or general benevolence, many have come to expect such as the primary purpose of the church. Friends there is no command, example or inference in scripture that justifies some things that churches are engaged in. As a result, some will appeal to various passages of scripture or principles that they THINK authorizes such activities. In our lesson today, we are going to examine one such principle.

Sometimes we are asked the question, “Is there a difference between what the individual and the local church can do?” It is certainly a valid question and worthy of consideration. The answer to this question will have a bearing on the work of the church and its limitations, as well as the responsibilities of every Christian. The purpose of our lesson today is to examine what the Bible teaches about this subject.

NOTE: As we begin I want to make it clear that we are not questioning whether or not some of the things being done are good works. They are! And in many cases they are works that NEED to be addressed by us as Christians. IN recent weeks we have discussed both judgment and accountability in matters of caring for the poor and needy, and we will continue to do so. But the question is whether or not such is the work and purpose of the church. It is because of our respect for the Lord’s church that we discuss such things.

***WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH?***

1. **DOES THE BIBLE MAKE A** **CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE CHURCH?**
2. **1 TIM. 5:16** – This is a text that deals with the church (local congregation) helping the needy of their number. Notice how the church is only to step in if all other avenues have been exhausted
3. **MATT. 18:15-17** – notice how in dealing with a sinning brother, as a Christian you first have an obligation to go to him alone and seek to resolve the difference individually. Only if that does not work does the church eventually become involved.
4. **ACTS 5:1-4** – While the possession was his own it did not belong to the church. He had to bring the proceeds and lay it at the apostles’ feet.
5. **1 COR**. **11:33-34** – This text comes at the conclusion of a discourse where Paulis addressing abuses of the Lord’s Supper – (**1 COR. 11:17-33**) – they had turned it into a common meal and Paul rebuked them for doing so. In our text, Paul notes that eating meals is to be done at home while eating the “Lord’s Supper” is for when we assemble together.
6. **In all these verses we find a clear distinction between the church and individual Christians**. We could conclude our lesson right now and have a biblical answer to the question, but there is more we want to consider as we seek to understand what the bible teaches about this subject.
7. **THE CHURCH IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN** – As you study the scriptures you will see the church is only part of the Christian’s life.
8. 5 distinct relationships addressed in the Bible concerning the Christian’s life.
   1. **HOME** – **1 TIM. 5:8** – To fulfill various roles in the family relationship - When the husband works to provide for his own household is that the church in action – NO!!! **EPH. 5:22-6:4** - When the wife submits to the husband as the head is that the church in action. Note the distinction in **verse 24** - NO!!! when the husband loves his own wife is that the church in action – NO!!!
   2. **WORK** – **1 THESS. 4:11-12; EPH. 4:28** – When we work we are taking care of economic responsibilities it is not the church taking care of them for us.
   3. **COMMUNITY** – In our relationship as being part of the community we fulfill responsibilities such as being a good neighbor, helping the needy, making society a better place – **1 PET. 2:12** – Individually we should be pillars in our community. **COL. 4:5-6** – Be an example for good to those in the world. **ROM. 13:8** – Pay your bills on time. **GAL. 6:10** – Be in the habit of doing good for others.
   4. **GOVERNMENT – ROM. 13:1-7 –** We are obligated to pay our taxes and support our government.
   5. **THE CHURCH –** Clearly we have responsibilities to the church which Christ purchased with his own blood
      1. It is why we assemble and lay by in store **–** **HEB. 10:25, 1 COR. 16:1-2**
      2. It is why we do our part by individually fulfilling our duties **– EPH. 4:16; 1 COR. 12:12-27.**
      3. In all of our relationships as Christians we have the responsibilities to fulfill our duties. How are we doing? When we stand before God in judgment we will not give an account of what the church did but of what we did as individuals. Did we individually fulfill our responsibility to the Lord in all these relationships?
9. There are many things an individual can do that the church cannot – the church is only a part of the life of a Christian.
   1. Husbands and wives have responsibilities toward one another that are not part of the church
   2. Christians can start businesses and work for companies etc. but you do not find the church in the Bible starting a business or engaging in business enterprises. In fact the only manner of receiving funds was thru the freewill offering of its members - **2 COR. 9:6-8**
   3. Christians can go movies, restaurants, or parks for entertainment or recreation. Where in the Bible do you find the church engaged in recreational or entertainment activities? **1 TIM. 4:8** – Certainly not in this scripture.
   4. The Christian ought to be involved in the community and seek to make it better.
   5. The Christian ought to be concerned for the needy within their community
   6. The Christian must pay their taxes.
   7. They can vote, work to reform society for the better, run for public office, but nowhere in the bible do we find the church involved in political reform, lobbying or governments.
10. Some actions are assigned to both the individual and the church –
    1. Teaching –
       1. Individual – **ACTS 8:4, 11:19-20, 18:24-26**
       2. Church – **ACTS 11:22-23** – The church in Jerusalem sent out Barnabas to Antioch to teach. **ACTS 13:1-3** – Churches supported the preaching of the gospel.
    2. Benevolence –
       1. Both engaged in benevolence – **1 TIM. 5:16** – Distinguishes between the two.
       2. The church has limited responsibilities in this area to relieve needy saints after other means have been exhausted – **2 COR. 8:1-5, ACTS 4:32-35** – The multitude of those who believed
       3. Individuals have greater responsibility in this area – **JAMES 1:27 – TITUS 2:14 – MATT. 25:34-40**
    3. Exhorting –
       1. Individual – **HEB. 3:12-13** – Individuals were to exhort one another.
       2. Church - **HEB. 10:23-25** – The church exhorts one another and provokes one another to love and good works when we assemble together as the church.
       3. But they do not conflict with one another. As you individually carry out your personal responsibility it is never in conflict with your responsibility as a member of the Lord’s church. In fact while distinctly different they actually complement one another – in the same way that a man can be a father and a husband at the same time. Each comes with unique responsibilities, but the work of a husband does not negate the work of being a father and vice versa.
11. We have responsibilities concerning the local church –
    1. The church is built up based on what we as Christians supply – **EPH. 4:16**
    2. That is why it is important that we grow as Christians **– 2 PET. 3:18**
    3. To use our individual abilities – **1 COR. 12:12,27**
    4. Each member has a responsibility to maintain unity and peace – **EPH. 4:1-3**
    5. Each member has a responsibility to maintain the purity of the church **- 1 COR. 5:6-8**
    6. Each member has a responsibility to give so the church can do the work given to it by God – Evangelism, Edification and Benevolence – **1 COR. 16:1-2**
12. Concerning judgment –
    1. When you stand before God you are going to answer individually as a Christian. You will be giving account for how you were involved with the church and whether or not you sought to be identified with the one true church – **ACTS 20:28**
    2. You will also answer for other areas of your life – **2 COR. 5:10; ROM. 14:10-12**
13. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?
14. As you study the work of the church you will find that is limited if you are to follow the pattern given to us.
    1. Worship - Any god or one God? **JN. 4:23-24** – My way or God’s way.
    2. Evangelism – Any message, philosophy, tradition or the only the message of the gospel – **MARK 16:15** – Preach the gospel! Send support to the man – **PHIL. 4:14-16 – Not to a missionary society or sponsoring church but to the man. We are limited by God’s pattern!**
    3. Benevolence – Limited to needy saints – **ROM. 15:25-27**
    4. **The question is do…we respect God’s pattern??? Do we respect his authority?**
15. We cannot hire the church to do those things God commands us to do as Christians.
16. Many will reason that what the individual can do the church can do. They argue that the church is made up of individuals, so anything the individual can do is actually the church at work. While it is true that the church is made up of individuals – 1 COR. 12:12-27 - we have seen from what the bible teaches that this premise is not true. Paul’s point in addressing the Corinthians was to call for unity in their conduct as the church. It was a call for them to work together and do their part. In this text he was not dealing with their responsibilities in other aspects of their lives.
17. Others take passages completely out of context to strive to justify general benevolence – such as GAL. 6:10; JAMES 1:27. But if you examine the context of these verses they are clearly appealing to Christians individual and not congregations.

**CONCLUSION** – What does the Bible teach?

Can we see the difference between the individual and the church?

It is a distinction made clear for us in the scriptures!

Do we respect the word?

Are we willing to follow its’ pattern