

The Bulletin

Meeks Street Church of Christ

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February 19, 2023

“The Difference Between Individual & Church Action”

By Brian Meade



One of the great controversies among God’s people has been over the issue of what is the true mission and work of the church. This issue has divided brethren who used to work together in the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ, and is still a matter of division today. This is the great tragedy of division!

One of the ways men have attempted to justify church entertainment, food, recreation, and all manner of fun and games for the church to sponsor— is by saying that there is no difference in the individual Christian and the collective church.

Brethren have for years made an argument based on the principle that whatever the individual can do, the church can do as well. This reasoning makes church action equal to everything that an individual can do. And all this arguing is said to make the case that we can support from the treasury: church athletics, such as baseball and basketball teams. This principle is why brethren want to build and maintain Family Life Centers, Daycares, and Fellowship Halls all paid for by the Lord’s money. But is this a valid argument for this new type of work for the church to be involved in?

I have pictured a family cookout that we may have from time to time with our family, but what about the church? Can the church decide to have a “church cookout” and use money collected for the work of the church to pay for it? As we should know from the Scriptures, we can only use the money collected for the purposes that God gives us to use it, and God is silent on such matters. And we must respect that silence, and not act presumptively (Leviticus 10:1-3; Acts 15:24; Hebrews 7:14).

I. Understanding Individual Action from the Scriptures.

First, let us look to some passages that teach us individual action outside the collectivity of a local assembly.

(1) I Timothy 5:16, *“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”*

Clearly, one can see both, individual action and church action, in this particular passage of scripture. It is the individual Christian’s responsibility to care for their relative, who is a widow, while the church treasury can support those who are truly without means of support (no relatives).

One situation calls for the collectivity of the church to step in and relieve the need for a true widow and the other calls upon individuals to help so that the church is not “burdened.” This is one of the easiest to find scriptures that make a distinction between individual actions and the actions of an assembly.

(2) Matthew 18:15-17, *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”*

These words of Jesus concerning a brother who has sinned against another brother are at the first— an individual matter, between brethren (verse 15). The offended brother is to go privately to the offending brother in an effort to correct the wrong. But if he does not hear the brother, he is to involve more as witnesses (verse 16), and if that fails— then the whole assembly is involved (verse 17).

Hence, what was a private and individual matter can become congregational in scope— but it did not start out that way. And if the brother who has sinned corrects the matter, then it would stay an individual matter entirely.

(3) II Corinthians 13:5, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.”*

It should be easy to understand that what Paul commissioned the church at Corinth to do (and all Christians as well) is to examine themselves in an individual way. This is told to each of the assembly, but is carried out only when each Christian looks into his own heart and makes an honest examination of his own self before God.

(4) Acts 5:4, *“While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”*

In the narrative of Acts 5:1-10, Ananias and Sapphira sold a possession and lied about how much they had laid *“at the apostles feet.”* They had the right to buy or sell with their own money as individuals. Peter reminds them of this principal as he says that it was in their own control to do as they wanted, but when they gave it to God— their money ceased to be under their control. It was now under the collective control of the church.

This shows a great distinction between my money, as an individual, and the money used by the church to do the work of God.

(5) I Timothy 5:10, *“well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”*

Paul gives a list of what kind of works the widow indeed may have done as an individual Christian. Bringing up children is entirely an individual matter as a part of their own home. Lodging strangers in her home and washing the saints’ feet qualifies as an individual works of hospitality. Also her actions to relieve the afflicted and every good work are what *“she has diligently followed”* herself.

(6) I Corinthians 7:3-5, *“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”*

This is Paul’s instructions to each husband and wife to render the affection due to each other in their marriage. These instructions were not applicable to the whole church as a collective, due to the fact that not all are married. But as many who were married, they were to follow these instructions as individual married couples.

(7) Galatians 6:10, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

Individual Christians can and should, as they have the opportunity, do good to all men, and particularly to their fellow Christians. The context of this passage of scripture is all about individual service to one another (Galatians 6:1-9).

Some have made the argument that this letter was written to the church at Galatia (Galatians 1:2) and that somehow makes all instructions given to the church at Galatia congregational in scope. But as we have already seen, you can have a letter written to the local church, but in that letter, also have individual Christian responsibilities.

(8) James 1:27, *“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”*

James taught that a part of *“pure and defiled religion before God”* means that I, personally, visit orphans and widows as they did in the days before institutions that take away personal responsibility. Some want to do this by proxy, rather than in person. There were no institutions that churches pooled their money and just sent their fifth Sunday contribution to support the institution in their work of relieving. Just as the instructions to *“keep oneself unspotted from the world”* are individual in nature— so are the former instructions as well.

So to say things like, “You can’t separate yourself from the church, so therefore church action is the same as individual action is a false premise leading to error concerning the work of the church. The Bible does make a distinction!

(Continued Next Sunday).

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Daniel Holloway, Debbie Keplinger, Sam Johnson, J F Dancer, Robbie, Sheila, and Sherry Doles, Sandi Poole, Nathan Cox, Sandra Oliver, Brandon Briggs, Jimmy Briggs, Chad Harris, Randy Ferrell (Brandi's brother in law), Eli Johnson, Burt Ward, Wayne Bivens (recovering from double by-pass) Ricky Doles, and Jamie Jones.

Danny Cottrell has an upcoming surgery in March.

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer:	Blake Briggs
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon #1:	<i>"What The Dead Want Us To Know"</i>
<u>Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:</u>	Fred Johnson
Workbook:	Philippians
Author:	Paul R. Blake
Starting Page & Question:	<i>Page #70, Question #1</i>

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements:	Doug George
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Paul Johnson
Scripture Reading:	<i>Philippians 4:4-6</i>
Song Leader:	Jerry Kennemur
Lord's Supper:	Jerry Kennemur
Assisting:	— —
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon #2:	<i>"Overcoming Worry"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Tim Harris Sr.

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

February 22nd:

Auditorium Bible Class:	Paul Busby
Workbook:	The Miracles Of Jesus
Author:	Mike Willis
Starting Page & Question:	<i>Page #78, Question #10</i>
Invitation:	Dan Cottrell
Song Leader:	Brian Meade
Closing Prayer:	Doug George



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Meeks Street Church of Christ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgiXJxZC1oraOugO9qIfBtw?view_as=subscriber

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“What The Dead Want Us To Know”

Lesson Text: **Luke 16:25-29.**

I. There Is Life After Death!

- Pew Research Poll Shows Diverse Answers?
- The Bible Answers This Question in Many Places:
 - **Luke 16:19-24; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43.**
- The Resurrection is Real **Acts 17:30-33.**
 - We Will All Come To Believe In The Resurrection
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:4:13-18.**
 - **1 Corinthians 15:20-26.**

One-in-six Americans do not believe in any afterlife

% of U.S. adults who ...

	%
Believe in both heaven and hell	61
Believe only in heaven	13
Believe only in hell	1
Believe in neither heaven nor hell	26
Believe in an afterlife	7
Do not believe in any afterlife	17
No answer	1

Source: Survey conducted Sept. 20-26, 2021, among U.S. adults. “Few Americans Blame God or Say Faith Has Been Shaken Amid Pandemic, Other Tragedies”

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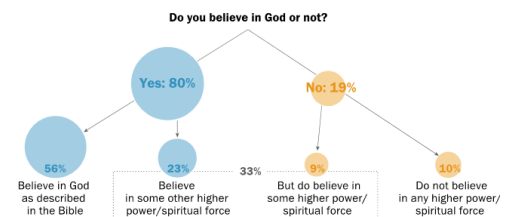
II. God Is Real!

- The Debate Over Whether God Is Real Will Have Ceased!
 - There Are No Dead Atheist Or Agnostics!
 - All Men Will Bow And Confess Jesus- **Philippians 2:9-11.**
- All Who Mocked The Existence Of God Will Know The Foolishness Of That Choice. **Psalms 14:1.**
 - Many Have Mocked God’s Existence Now By Saying:
 - The “Old Man Upstairs.”
 - The “Absentee Landlord.”
 - All Mocking Will Cease When We See God And Jesus! **Isaiah 6:1-5.**

III. The Bible Is Indisputably True!

- **Psalms 19:7-11.**
- Pew Research Poll Shows Lack Of Faith...
- Many Doubt The Miracles, The Signs, And Even The Inspiration Of The Bible.
- Nonetheless, All The Statements Of Truth The Bible Declares Will Be Vindicated As Unquestioned Truth!
 - That We Were Created In **Genesis 1-2.**
 - That God Sent The Flood In **Genesis 6–7.**
 - Those Who Rejected The Warnings, Shunned The Promises, And Showed Contempt For God’s Word Will Not Do So In Eternity!
 - **2 Peter 3:3-12.**
 - **Luke 16:22-23.**

One-third of U.S. adults believe in a higher power of some kind, but not in God as described in Bible



Note: Don't know or unclear responses not shown. Figures may not add to subtotals indicated due to rounding. Source: Survey conducted Dec. 4-16, 2017, among U.S. adults. “When Americans Say They Believe in God, What Do They Mean?”

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IV. Now Is The Time To Prepare For Eternity!

- **Luke 16:27-31.** The Rich Man Was Concerned For His Five Brothers.
 - One Thing Is Certain From The Words Of Jesus- We Must Listen To The Word!
 - **2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 3:7-15.**

“Overcoming Worry”

Lesson Text: **Philippians 4:4-6.**

I. The Problems Of Worry.

- What Is Worry?
merimma “to draw in different directions, distract— that which causes this, a care, especially an anxious care.” (Vines)
“Anxiety about things that pertain to this earthly life.” (Thayer).
- Concern Versus Worry?
- The Physical Problems Of Worry.
- The Spiritual Problems Of Worry.
- **Matthew 6:25-30.**
 1. Worry Is A Waste Of Time.
 2. Unproductive To Our Service To God.
 3. Shows A Lack Of Trust in God.

II. Trusting God With Our Worries.

- **Matthew 6:31-32.**
- **Philippians 4:6-7** Let God Have Our Problems, Concerns, And Needs.
- **Proverbs 3:5-8.**

III. By Rejoicing In God.

- **Philippians 4:4.**
- Worry Hinders Our Joy In The Lord.
- Counting Our Blessings In The Lord Dispels Worry.

IV. By Making God Our Priority.

- **Matthew 6:33.**
- Our Focus Should Be Working In The Kingdom And Serving Christ.