

Lesson 9 | Wednesday, January 31, 2024

MIND YOUR KING, lessons from Doy Moyer's Book, Mind Your King.

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For the last lessons, we have tried to show that God has communicated to us the way He has made us to communicate with each other. We **tell** others what we want, we **show** others what we want, or we **imply** what we expect of others. We have addressed what Christians did in their worship. And in the last lesson, we tried to distinguish between the way the New Testament speaks of the church and the way the world has institutionalized The Church – and even some Christians. The church is people.

In this lesson we want to consider why churches exist and what churches were to do in what is often called their “work.”

Because Jesus is head of the church (Colossians 1:18), there is nothing we should be or do that our Head has not instructed us in. In fact, why do churches even exist? If salvation came to them on Pentecost (c.f. Acts 2:38-40), why was there anything different? What did the Apostles lead those Christians to do in their new found faith and new found purpose.

First, churches exist. Though some say only individual activity constitutes church action, the New Testament shows otherwise. Epistles were addressed to the collective noun of “the church of God at Corinth” (1Corinthians 1:2) or “To the churches of Galatia” (1:1) (see also, 2Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1Thes 1:1; 2Thes 1:1). The Corinthians accomplished their collective responsibilities when they assembled (1Cor 5:4) and should have worshipped together in the Lord’s Supper (11:20) and gathered funds for the saints (16:1-2). The regular meetings were when they worshipped together as the Jerusalem church did (Acts 2:42). It was not merely a gathering of individuals, it was a body of people who were acting as one.

Next, these bodies were designed to have organization. When Paul wrote to Philippi, they had men who were “overseers and deacons” (1:1) – not just individuals who said they were – but people who had been appointed because of qualification, to serve (c.f. 1Timothy 3:1-13, see v 10). These bishops (overseers) who were called also elders, pastors or shepherds (c.f. Acts 20:28) were a group always represented as a plurality and limited in their scope of oversight to those “among you” (1Peter 5:2). In other words, shepherd only the local group of which they belong. The fact that there were warnings of truth distortion and desertions that will not spare the flocks where they serve (c.f. Acts 20:29-30, also 2Timothy 4:1-6) would argue that the structure of these arrangements for churches was something the teaching God had given the Apostles was how God was intending to manage “as God would have you” (1Peter 5:2).

Next, these bodies were intended to worship together. As indicated in Acts 2:42, they began worshipping together independent of the religion of the Temple and together under the Apostle’s teaching. This was to “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” in their worship together (c.f. Hebrews 10:24-25). There has always been a purpose. And as Luke noted, “On the first day of the week, we assembled to break bread” (Acts 20:7). The Lord’s Supper drew them together because it was the weekly memorial feast that identified who they were. Christians banded together because of that identity and were commissioned to pool together funds for their together work (c.f. 1Corinthians 16:2) and again, for this commemoration of the Lord’s death. Again, the fact that the Corinthians were warned to correct the manner in which they were engaging in the Lord’s Supper further emphasizes that instructions about communion, as well as prayer leading (1Timothy 2:8) and singing (Colossians 3:16).

Next, these bodies pooled their resources together for work. Because the local church exists for specific reasons outlined in the New Testament, they pooled these resources together to engage in what we often call “the work of the Lord” (c.f. 1Corinthians 15:58, though that is work Christians are doing – not churches per se, or Paul is doing, c.f. 1Corinthians 9:1). These were not forced tithes or percentages, but free will offerings (2Corinthians 9:6-8). In Acts, these funds were placed “at the Apostle’s feet” (4:36-

37; 5:1-2) in which the Apostles gained charge of the funds and “distributed them” as need arose. This is a “treasury.” So when Paul instruct Corinth, “each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need,” these fund from “each of you” were “set aside” so that when Paul came, there was no need for another “collection” because it was stored together “at the Apostle’s feet/treasury.” Further, in Paul’s reasoning, there were distinctions to be made between what Christians needed to see as their work and responsibility and what a church should consider theirs’ (c.f. 1Timothy 5:16). From this last admonition we are correct in believing that the Apostles taught churches that they were to act with response to the directions that they had been given – even in regards to the expenditure of the pooled funds.

What did these bodies use their resources for? They provided for **teaching and preaching**. The Philippian church was praised by Paul because they had, as a church, “in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times.” (4:15-16). Because Paul said that those who preach the gospel have a right to an income from their work (1Corinthians 9:14), churches like Philippi collected funds so that they could provide for those who engaged in this teaching.

Yet from the beginning, churches used their resources to provide for the needy among them. Please note:

1. Acts 2:44-46: “Now **all the believers** were together and held all things in common.”
2. Acts 4:33-35: “Now the **entire group of those who believed** were of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common... For there was not a needy person **among them** because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of what was sold, **and laid them at the apostles’ feet.**”
3. Acts 6:1-6: “In those days, as **the disciples** were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that **their widows** were being overlooked.”
4. Acts 11:27-30: “Each of **the disciples**, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the **brothers and sisters** who lived in Judea.”
5. 1Corinthians 16:1-2: “Now about the collection **for the saints...**”
6. 2Corinthians 8:1-4: “We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that was given to the churches of Macedonia... they begged us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the **ministry to the saints.**”
7. 2Corinthians 9:1ff: “Now concerning **the ministry to the saints...** For the ministry of this service is not only supplying **the needs of the saints** but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”
8. Romans 15:25-26: “Right now I am traveling to Jerusalem **to serve the saints**, because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution **for the poor among the saints** in Jerusalem.”

So, what the churches did as their work, collectively, was provide for the teaching and preaching of the gospel – where evangelism would take place (c.f. Philippians 4:15-16; 2Corinthians 11:8) – and where edification would take place (c.f. 2Timothy 4:2-3). Support was not funneled through organizations who managed another congregation (i.e. a sponsoring church), managed by a mission board (i.e. a missionary society) or managed by a college (for “edification”) where these organizations manage the funds and decide how the funds are used. And additionally, what the churches did as their work, collectively, was provide for the needs of needy saints.

The provisions needed for meeting together (the Communion, the location, the building, the song books, the lights, the pencils, the water fountain, etc.,) all provide what is needed to provide for these things early churches did when they were together. Many other things happened “they... broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts” because Don’t you have homes in which to eat and drink?... Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home...” (1Corinthians 11:22,33).

There is no hierarchy. No centralized churches or agencies. No complications. Just simplicity. What has changed today is human methods to hierarchize, centralize, complicate and accomplish something not in the early church.