

## LIBERTIES ILLICITLY TAKEN

It always troubles me to hear of brethren taking liberties with God's Word not granted them therein. Whether in the name of greater unity or (alleged) growth or with no **excuse** offered, all too often these days we hear or read of those who have decided to abandon the Word Jesus gave us in quest of some "new" area of interest that promises to make all of the problems of the past disappear. Such unauthorized ventures **fix** nothing—but they do create a whole new genre of troubles to plague the faithful for generations to come.

The primary concern of the church Jesus built—that is, the one about which one may read in the pages of the New Testament—is the salvation of lost souls. Our spheres of operation include preaching the one, true Gospel to the lost (Mat. 28:10–20), preaching the one, true Gospel to the saved by way of edification (Acts 20:32), and engaging in benevolence (Jam. 1:27). There is no disputing these activities. The Bible plainly enjoins—not suggests—the three of them.

Where in these three spheres of operation—or, where in the Bible at all, for that matter—do we find authority for entertainment? For exercise classes? For rummage sales? For ball teams? The answer is simple: we do not find the authority. It is not the work of the church to rear children; that is the job of parents. It is not the work of the church to provide a "family life center" to fill your boring leisure hours. If you are doing the Jesus-authorized work of the church you will find that you have no "boring hours."

How does it feel to be a member of a congregation that has forsaken the Jesus-authorized work of the church in preference for worldly and unauthorized pursuits? I do not know, myself, as I am not so attached. I would think that one's conscience would bother him, seeing how he has affiliated himself with a group more concerned with entertaining each other than pleasing the One Who died on the cross to save him. While that may sound sarcastic (usually when I hit the nail on the head, the owner of the specific head makes such an accusation), it is not. Think about it: The church is not about me or you or anything or anyone but Him and Judgment. Since He will Judge us, ought not we do His Will? His Will is revealed in the pages of the New Testament. If the congregation of the church of Christ you attend does not respect the Jesus-authorized work of the church, leave it immediately and find [or start, DM] a sound group. Heaven and Hell hang in the balance for you—and your family.

—Tim Smith  
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