

Benevolence

Does God want churches using their funds to offer benevolence to the world? Many firmly believe so. It is often the case that people in the community will ask a church to pay their rent, utilities, medical bills, and even give them money for gas.

Some suggest that since Jesus helped the poor, a church must do the same. Let's consider what the Scripture says about the work of a local church.

What kind of work does God want a church to do?

- Churches should be involved in the work of evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Mark 16:15; Philippians 4:15; Acts 6:7). God wants churches to be busy with the work of preaching the gospel to the lost.
- Churches should be involved in the work of edification (1 Corinthians 14:26). Churches are to teach the saved, worship God, build up the members, and grow spiritually.
- Churches should be involved in the work of benevolence (Acts 4:32-37; 11:27-30). Benevolence involves displaying acts of kindness and giving towards the poor and less fortunate.

The work of benevolence.

- God expects individual Christians to be involved in this work. The Bible makes a clear distinction between the actions of an individual Christian and the local church (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Timothy 5:16). Before involving the local church, God expects benevolence first to be done by individual Christians (1 Timothy 5:16; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 John 3:17; James 1:27).
- Unlike the individual Christian, local churches are limited to providing benevolence to Christians (Acts 4:32-25; 11:27-29; Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:1, 12; 1 Timothy 5:3-5). God does not want the church to provide benevolence to the world!
- The saints who receive benevolence from the church treasury must truly be in need (Acts 4:34-35). They must be facing dire circumstances beyond their control. The church funds should not be used to bail out Christians who are poor stewards of their money!
- Local church leaders are to receive and distribute the benevolent funds (Acts 11:30). The first deacons in Jerusalem were over the work of helping the needy widows (Acts 6:1-7).

How should this impact us?

- It should impact our giving. We must always remember that part of the reason we pool our resources is to provide relief for needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
- It should impact the local church's responsibility to the world. The local church doesn't have the responsibility to feed the world physically. Instead, it is the responsibility of the church to feed the world spiritually (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Acts 8:4; Mark 16:15). Spiritual food is what is most important (John 6:27).

Conclusion:

Have you partaken of the spiritual food that Jesus offers?

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