

Do Not Let The Church Be Burdened... With Schools

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read 1 Timothy 5:16, taking special note of the phrase, “do not let the church be burdened.”
2. According to this passage, the church should not be burdened with giving aid to certain widows—those who have family members who can take care of them. In the case of these widows, it is not the church’s responsibility to care for their needs (with the resources which belong exclusively to it). It is the individual’s responsibility, the family’s responsibility.
3. While the above passage is discussing a specific situation, let’s not miss the general principle taught in this passage, which is: **Do not burden the local church with responsibilities that belong to the individual and the family.**
4. Sadly, we see many instances of this today, both in denominational churches and in many “churches of Christ.” Churches have burdened themselves with many responsibilities that the Lord never assigned to the church, responsibilities that instead belong to the individual Christian, or to organizations funded by individuals. And because they burden themselves with these other works, they often neglect the very work God has assigned to them.
5. The first lesson in this series will be entitled, **“Do Not Let The Church Be Burdened With Establishing or Supporting Schools.”**
 - a. Denominational churches have long been involved in this, but many “churches of Christ” are also involved.
 - b. You would certainly find this in the budget of some churches of Christ in this area.
 - c. Prattville Church of Christ website: “We provide a Day School that is second to none. We have been servicing the community for over 20 years. We are a complete Pre-School program designed to promote a child’s self-esteem and creativity in a fun way while preparing them for Kindergarten. Our qualified teachers have extensive teaching experience and are also trained in CPR and First Aid. Our curriculum has

as its goal the development of the total child. A spiritual emphasis is a priority of the regular program. The everyday environment is definitely Christian.”

6. Let’s examine some reasons why churches should not be burdened with this work/responsibility.

BODY:

- I. First and foremost, there is **no authority** for churches establishing schools of secular education, or for sending money to them (although these schools typically will have Bible classes as part of their curriculum).
 - A. Look throughout the New Testament and you won’t find any churches involved in the secular education of children.
 1. In fact, the only mention of a school is found in Acts 19:9, “the school of Tyrannus.
 - a. Read this passage, and it’s clear that Paul simply took advantage of this meeting place to preach the gospel.
 2. Children did receive some secular education during the first century, during the time the New Testament was written. *Holman’s Bible Dictionary* has this note about the education of Jewish children:
 - a. “The elementary school system among the Jews developed in connection with the synagogue. Even before the days of Jesus, schools for the young were located in practically every important Jewish community. The teacher was generally the synagogue “attendant.” An assistant was provided if there were more than twenty-five students. The primary aim of education at the synagogue school was religious. The Old Testament was the subject matter for this instruction. Reading, writing and arithmetic were also taught. Memorization, drill and review were used as approaches to teaching.”
 3. Now, if God had wanted churches to become involved in this process, don’t you think there would be at least some mention of it in the New Testament?
 - a. We cannot find where a church was *commanded* to do so. We cannot find an *example* of a church doing so. And we can’t find any passages that *imply* that it should do so. But please, let me urge you to do your own search.

4. So again, there is no authority for churches to take on the work of educating children in the secular realm.

II. A second reason: Local churches were designed by God to be a “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15); to sound forth the word of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:8); to train its members, not in secular matters, but in “the faith,” or the gospel (Ephesians 4:13).

A. Let’s read some passages to prove the point.

1. 1 Corinthians 4:17—Paul taught the same thing in every church.
2. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5—This shows what he taught. Notice how he limited his subject matter. No worldly wisdom, just the wisdom of God.
3. Acts 18:11—This passage tells of his stay in Corinth. He stayed there a year and a half, teaching the word of God among them.
 - a. As long as Paul stayed there, wouldn’t this have been a good opportunity to establish a school, to get the church there involved in the education of their children? But of course, there is nothing said about that.
4. All of this is in harmony with the description of the church in 1 Timothy 3:15: “the pillar and ground of the truth.”
5. Imagine me announcing that next Sunday’s sermon would be preparing for your college entrance exams?

B. Ephesians 4:11-16 gives a clear picture of the goals God has in mind for each local church, and the provisions He has made to help us accomplish these goals.

1. As to provisions, notice v. 11—no educational directors mentioned here, although many churches today have one. God did not equip the church with these. This is something man has added in his own wisdom.
2. Notice the goals mentioned in v. 13-14.
 - a. It’s what 1 Timothy 1:4 calls “godly edification” (NKJV).
3. Now, notice v. 15, which tells how these goals can be accomplished: by “speaking the truth in love.”
4. Paul left Titus in Crete to “set in order the things that are lacking” (Titus 1:5). Does anyone think that the establishment of a school would be included in

what was lacking? In fact, read the rest of Titus and you'll see exactly what Paul talking was about.

III. Let's switch gears for a minute. Some churches concede that they should not be involved in the secular education of children, so what they do instead is send money to the Bible departments of some of these various schools (or to schools wholly devoted to training workers for the kingdom. (Prattville Church of Christ offers support to Sunset Bible Institute in Lubbock, TX, and Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, CO). **So what about sending money to the Bible department of a school? Or, what about building a school which teaches the Bible exclusively, or sending financial support to another school which does the same?** There are several problems with this, too.

A. **Again**, first and foremost, there is **no authority** for this.

1. We cannot find any examples of churches sending money to another institution to do the work God assigned to them.

B. **It involves a local church transferring its responsibility (at least in part) to another organization, a responsibility God has fully equipped the local church to meet.**

1. Recall our discussion of Ephesians 4:11-16.
2. Anyone willing to look at God's arrangements for the local church and say, "It looks like we don't have the tools to pull this off."
3. So it's not another *method* to accomplish the goal, as some claim—it's another organization doing it.

C. **How exactly could elders oversee what's being done by a separate organization?**

1. To protect the flock, the elders here make sure that what is taught from the pulpit and from all our various classes is the truth.
2. They would not be able to watch what was being taught in these other arrangements.

CONCLUSION:

1. Churches should not be burdened with the responsibility of establishing or supporting schools.
2. On whom should this burden be placed? Each individual family. It's up to each family to decide how to best educate their children. Some decide to home school. Others send their children to public schools, still others to private schools. It is my responsibility to make sure my children are educated, not the church's. Would it be wrong for some individuals here to get together and build a school? NO.
3. Would it be okay for the Prattmont Church of Christ to build a school which provides for the secular education of children, or to support financially another school which does the same? NO.
4. Would it be okay for the Prattmont Church of Christ to build a school which provides for the spiritual education of others, or to financially support another school which does the same? NO.
5. The fact that many churches are doing it, even many "churches of Christ," does not make it right.
6. The work of this local church is determined, not by what is popular, not by what will get us the biggest numbers, not by what people are calling for, not by what we think is good and right or more efficient, but by what the Lord authorizes us to do.