

It Is Written

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CHURCH RECREATION?

By Keith Camp

Recently I received an invitation to a facility that provided "ping pong, walking track, concerts, basketball, weights, pool table, board games, banquets, refreshments, etc." No, the invitation did not come from the local Boy's club, it came from a local church.

Increasingly, churches have begun to take on the atmosphere of social clubs; some do rival local health spas. Yet, I do NOT read in the Bible where "the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16: 16), in their life and death struggle to preach the gospel to a lost world, ever made such social/recreational provisions for that world (or themselves). Do you?

According to the New Testament (NT) the ONLY work God ordained the local church to do consists of:

Preaching the gospel: "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything" (1 Thess. 1:8).

Assembling for worship and edification: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Meeting the physical needs of destitute Christians: "Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:34-35). "Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1). "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The work of the local church was spiritual, NOT recreational.

And it certainly was not for lack of public interest that kept churches in the Bible out of athletics and entertainment. The world into which the gospel was first preached LOVED the sports arena. Their children played five different games of ball and the Roman emperors were masters at building public baths, theaters, stadiums and using them to 'politic' the people. The world back then had their superstar athletes, actors and actresses too. In fact, it is safe to say that America's enjoyment and pursuit of recreation/entertainment is equal to the people of New Testament times. But again, the New Testament is SILENT about local churches making ANY provision for the fulfillment of such interests. And get this!

The hope of the gospel was still-"proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Col. 1:23).

Churches in the New Testament understood that the world needed the gospel and its eternal benefits, not temporary distractions.

Are you disheartened, tired or fed-up with watching the church where you worship spend its time and resources to recreate and entertain itself and the world? Then, worship with a church that believes the gospel is STILL God's power to motivate all men to faith, obedience and salvation-

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Rom. 1:16).

He That Uttereth A Slander Is A Fool

By Kent E. Heaton, Sr.

Speech is the most powerful thing we possess as people. With speech we communicate with one another. It became such a powerful tool that God caused men to speak in different tongues to stop the building of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11).

Speech enables us to share the joys of life one with another. Yet, speech is also used to destroy and cause harm.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,” is a nice saying to use in life. But in reality, words spoken can hurt very much. Moses was kept from the promised land because he did not control his tongue. Naboth was murdered at the mouth of witnesses that lied. Jesus was accused of being a drunkard and blasphemer and sentenced to death by the words of the people, “Crucify him, crucify him.”

Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:36, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” There are no words that we speak that will not be with us in the judgment. James warns about the tongue how unruly it can be and is “a fire” (James 3). Men who cannot control their tongue and allow their speech to create harm and evil reports will be judged in sin.

Slander is the worse tool a Christian can use against another Christian. There are no depths of hypocrisy men take themselves when they begin to slander others in the family of God. To speak evil of, to whisper about, defame, report evil of, speak reproachfully, rail, revile, calumniate or blaspheme is out of character given to us by Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:21-23 tells us, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

To speak evil of one who is a brother or sister in Christ is without love. 1 Corinthians 13:5-6, [love] “does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.” Slander is found in the company of those who have a haughty look and a proud heart (Psalm 101:5). “But to the wicked God says: ‘What right have you to declare My statutes, or take My covenant in your mouth, Seeing you hate instruction and cast My words behind you? ... You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes’” (Psalm 50:16,17,19-21).

The child of God cannot abide in the presence of God nor dwell before Him if the heart is filled with slander: Psalm 15:2-3, “He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend.” If one slanders another, they are a fool: Proverbs 10:18, “Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.” How can it be that Christians can so fill their hearts to slander one another? James asks about the tongue, “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” Peter gives us the answer in 1 Peter 3:10: “For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit.” Amen!

Hypocrites In The Church

Author Unknown

- The man who says he is kept away from church by hypocrites is not influenced by them anywhere else.
- Business is full of them; but if he by chance sees where he can make some money, he does not hesitate because there are hypocrites making money.
- Society is crowded with them, and yet he never thinks of becoming a hermit.
- Married life is full of them, but that does not make him remain a bachelor.
- Hell will be full of them, and yet he is not doing anything to keep from going there.
- He makes you think he is trying to avoid hypocrites; and yet, he takes not one single step toward the only place where no hypocrites can go--heaven.
- Honestly now, is he not being a little hypocritical?