

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

January 6

2019

A New Year

This issue is the first of a new year. I wish to thank the brethren at Belleville for the support and encouragement you have been to me and Mary Ann during the past year and years. I wish for each of you a wonderful 2019. This will be true if each of us determines to faithfully serve the Lord. If you are now doing so, continue. If you are not doing so you have no better time than now to begin. It may be the ONLY time you have. (JH)



WHERE IS THE SCRIPTURE?

It has been a common practice for us to call upon our religious neighbors to provide the scriptures which authorize many of their teachings and practices. Of course, they have been unable to provide such. How sad it is that many who identify themselves as members of the Lord's church find themselves in the same situation as the denominationalists, i.e., unable to give scriptural authority for the things they teach and practice.

Many brethren contend that it is right for churches to support and maintain human institutions to do the work of the church. They talk about all the good that is done in "*caring for the poor little children*" and how wonderful it is that this is being done, but they fail to

produce the scripture that would authorize the church support of a human institution to do this work. Instead, they try to make it appear that those who oppose such are opposed to the work being done and simply do not want to help those who may be in need. This is not so. The truth is we do believe in helping those who are in need, but we do NOT believe we can engage in that which is unauthorized to do so. We need to learn that we can do all that the Lord would have us do without engaging in unscriptural actions.

Many of these brethren also encourage churches to support schools and colleges from their treasuries. Again we ask, "*Where is the scripture that authorizes the church support of schools and colleges?*" It is not that we are opposed to schools and colleges. They are good if used properly, however, we need to learn that providing secular education is not the work of the church.

Other churches have involved themselves in the providing of recreation and entertainment. It is very common to hear of church sponsored ball teams. In south Florida several congregations sponsored an annual track and field meet and invited the young people from different congregations in the area to participate. Again, we are not opposed to young or old participating in any form of recreation or entertainment that is right and proper. The questions remains, "*Where is the Bible authority for the church to provide such?*"

The scriptures teach that the oversight of elders is limited to the local church of which they are overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). This being true, then there is no authority for the elders of one church tending to the affairs of another church nor is there any authority for churches joining themselves together in some type of centralized arrangement to do their works. In the New Testament we read of local churches doing their own work, but nowhere do we read of churches pooling their resources to do a work to which all the churches were equally responsible. The only authority we have in the New Testament for one church sending to another church is when the receiving church had needs it could not supply. While in the St.

Louis area I learned of a group of preachers in that area getting together to discuss and plan a work for all the congregations "represented" by these preachers. By what authority did these preachers schedule such a meeting, and by what authority did they involve the churches in such a centralized effort of pooling their resources for an "area-wide" work?

Many other examples of churches involved in unscriptural activities could be cited. There are churches which run profit-making businesses such as day-care centers and kindergartens. One church in St. Louis had a special Bible school and charged tuition to those attending. Can you imagine the apostle Paul encouraging churches to charge people for their Bible instruction?

I hope all brethren will take the time to give serious thought to what is happening. Brethren, we need to realize that many have lost sight of what the New Testament teaches concerning the work and organization of the Lord's church. If you are a member of a church involved in any of the unscriptural activities we have discussed please consider our plea for a return to a "thus saith the Lord" for all we teach and practice. I am always encouraged when I hear of those who have turned from these unscriptural practices. I hope there will be many others who will follow their example.

✍ James Hahn



A Problem Area for Preachers

Paul told Timothy to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). It has been suggested that this phrase literally means to preach when folks like it and when they don't. In another place the apostles prayed for "boldness" in their preaching (Acts 4:29). So, preachers are to boldly proclaim a message that will sometimes be unpopular.

In the process of doing this work, a preacher is in a precarious situation. This boldness may cause his hearers to think that he is

over-confident. Some may imagine that he is close-minded. There may be the impression that he is not open to other points-of-view, or that he wants to stifle what others have to say. Sadly, in some cases and with some preachers, these accusations are true.

However, no preacher 'worth his salt' wants to discourage open discussion of issues. And, while he may speak forcefully on a given topic, he acknowledges his own limitations and the possibility that he can err in understanding the Scriptures. If he is obedient to the Word, he knows that he (like all others) must continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

In this age of "political correctness" it has become increasing unpopular to tell people that they are wrong about anything. But, of course, that is a significant part of what preachers do. Those who are doing their best to "reprove, rebuke and exhort" (2 Timothy 4:2) will inevitably touch some areas that are 'close to home.' When this happens, we urge you to seriously consider what has been said. Honestly examine yourself to see if you need to apply the lesson. Be willing to re-think your previous position. And, finally, do not hesitate to share your thoughts and concerns with the preacher. If he is the kind of man he ought to be, he will gladly discuss any issue with you. Give him the chance to do so!

✍ Greg Gwin

Belleville church of Christ

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www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 443-1938