

***Matthew 21:23: “By What Authority
Are You Doing These Things?”***

David Halbrook

Jesus was asked this question (article title) by the priests and elders as He taught in the Temple. Though asked with sinful motives, Jesus approved of the question itself and was willing to answer it if the “askers” were willing to answer the same question concerning John’s baptism—whether it was from God or man. Jesus knew that the priests and elders rejected John and his baptism, so His question exposed their hypocrisy in front of all the people at the Temple (was this loving preaching? Yes!). When they refused to answer His question, He refused to answer theirs because the point had been made. Plenty of evidence had been given to prove that John and Jesus were sent by the Father (Matt. 3:16-17). The priests and elders were not interested in evidence and truth from God but in their traditions and teachings (Matt. 15:1-9).

Today, we all need to think about the question, “By what authority are you doing ___---by the authority of heaven or of men?” People who think they don’t need God’s authority or only assume they are following His authority are lost in sin (1 Thess. 1:8; Matt. 7:21-23). Avoid this, walking in God’s love, commands, and authority (1 Jn. 5:3; Rom. 13:1).

Editor’s Note: This week’s article in *Arkansas Weekly* introduces a principle that will be applied in future articles. Find a way to introduce the “milk of the word” to someone you meet or know this week, while you deepen your own understanding. Also, as individuals, and a congregation, let’s continue asking ourselves this question.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
church of Christ--Quail Valley

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How Churches Can Develop Their Young People

Kyle Campbell

Mark Chaves, a professor at Duke University, has written, “People in the pews are getting older.” In the 1970s, people who attended a church assembly frequently were on average three years older than the general population. In 2008, there was a five-year gap. We have reached a point where he writes that “the average churchgoing adult in the United States is now 50-years-old.”

Every congregation needs to edify their young converts if they are going to have a chance at preserving their souls. There are a number of ways to accomplish this, including teaching and establishing them in the faith with solid gospel preaching and Bible class teaching.

There is, however, another way to cultivate strong faith and interest in our young adults. The elders of congregations need to make sure they are used in the church’s work. The young men can learn how to participate in the worship assemblies and the young women can learn how to teach in Bible classes, thereby ensuring that the next generation will be adequately developed. Both young men and women can be encouraged in visiting the sick, providing hospitality to the saints, and taking care of property - both of the congregation and of members.

Everyone wants to feel like their time and talents are needed, even the young. It is easy for the “baby boomers” in a congregation to complain about the self-absorbed “millennials” who refuse to support their congregation. But could it be the case that younger adults simply have not been encouraged and used as they could have been? This means older members who are willing to train and then hand off duties of which they have been responsible for many years.

A teenager, watching his friends take on positions of responsibility, can see himself in a more mature light. This way, the five and two talent teenager can add to their quiver of abilities (Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:4-8). *The Gospel Teacher, 11/16/14*

The Purpose of Our Assemblies

Stan Cox

Would it be considered controversial to state that the purpose of our worship assemblies is not to evangelize? Perhaps it would be less so if I explained what I mean by the statement.

First, I am not saying that evangelism can't take place in the assembly. In fact, first principle preaching in the worship assembly is one way that the children of Christians reach the point of being convicted, and thus converted. Also, it is conceivable that the conversion of an occasional visitor may be the salutary consequence of such lessons. More probably, first principle lessons will serve to *"stir up your pure minds by way of reminder"* (cf. 2 Peter 3:1), equipping the saints to share with others what they have learned, and had reinforced by the preacher's words.

In the first century, Paul revealed that visitors (unbelievers) might be present in a worship assembly. He wrote to the Corinthians, encouraging them to be circumspect with regard to speaking in tongues. *"Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all"* (1 Corinthians 14:23-24). Preaching (prophecy) is preferable to tongue speaking in the presence of the unbeliever, as it is preaching that will convince and convict him.

However, even in the making of the statement, there is an indication that the presence of the unbeliever is not a constant thing. It is by design that most who are in a worship assembly, most of the time, are the Christians who make up that congregation! Gospel Meetings and other special evangelical efforts are the exception.

We should not be upset if we have few or no visitors from the community visiting our corporate worship. It should not be our intent or design to make our assemblies, through compromise, more palatable to the "unchurched" (a term used to refer to the lost). While it is a wonderful thing to invite them to our worship, it is a mistake to think this is the way God intends for us to bring about growth, and the salvation of souls!

We assemble for the purpose of worshipping God! (cf. Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-22; 16:1-2). On occasion we practice discipline while gathered

together (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:4-5). The primary benefit we receive in our assemblies is edification (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 14:1-5; Colossians 3:16).

In fact, Paul told the Ephesians that the offices in the church, *"apostles... prophets... evangelists... pastors and teachers"* was for *"the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:11-13). It is in this passage that we begin to understand the second major purpose of our worship assemblies. In addition to worshipping God (the first priority), our assemblies equip us to minister. They help us to become mature, complete, and able to do the work of evangelism **out there!** We should carefully consider the great commission that Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

I am not saying that you are doing anything wrong or misguided in inviting your friends to our worship assembly. But, understand this, if they are not Christians, their attendance to worship has limited benefit to them. It is much better, more effective, and needful for you to study with them. They, being convicted by the word of God will then become disciples of Jesus Christ, and able to worship God acceptably in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24). In effect, God did not tell you to invite them to come, he said to **GO**. You are not doing the work of evangelism until and unless you do! Brethren, think about it!

6 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, 7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, 8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. (Titus 2:6-8)

It is a tremendously important opportunity and responsibility to set an example for others. Young men are here exhorted to accept the challenge to order their minds and conduct in ways that impact those around them for truth and righteousness. Young Christians have many peers who do not share their faith. Set an example for the unbelievers that will influence them for Christ and their salvation. Be their reason to obey and praise God; not their reason to reject Christ and His gospel.

Joe. R. Price, Sword Tips #349 (November 20, 2014)