

## Is The Church A Business?

Recently, there was an excerpt in The Hamilton Herald-News about the newest member of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. The interesting part is, is that it was a denominational church! "Live Oak Fellowship ... is the newest member of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce," read the quote (Hamilton Herald-News, 133<sup>rd</sup> Year Vol. 46 – Nov. 13 2008).

The purpose of any chamber of commerce or board of traders (as it is also known) is to form a business network. Business owners in towns and cities form these local societies to advocate on behalf of the local businesses. The duties of this group are to promote the towns' or cities' local economy.

So this raises the question, Is the church a business? Did the Lord Jesus intend for His body to engage in such an organization? The answer to both of these is NO!

Jesus said, "*I will build My church...*" (Matt. 16:18), that means it is His. It is under His authority, as He is the head (Eph. 1:22). Therefore, we are only to do what He says we can do. God has revealed to us these things that we need to know through His Son, Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2). This is why it is important to have book, chapter, and verse for all that we do in the church.

In regards to the money (treasury) that is collected every Sunday (1 Cor. 1:16), we have authority for what to do with it -- including its limitations. The local church does have authority for a collection (Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 1:16), and the ways that it can be used are also clear. The treasury can be used to preach the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 9:14; 2 Cor. 11:8), edify the saints in Christ (1 Cor. 14:26; Acts 20:28-32), and provide limited benevolence to needy saints (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Tim. 5:16). Outside of this, we have no book, chapter, and verse to use the Lord's money, because He has not told us otherwise.

However my friends, this is not how a business is run. Because as a business owner, you make all the rules, you decide where the money is spent, all the authority is left up to you. So is the church a business? Does the church belong in the Chamber of Commerce? No, because we have no authority for it to be so!

Those who acted in this deed, acted without looking to authority first. They did not look at the Word, because it was something *they* wanted to do. Paul warns those at Ephesus: "*For I know after my departure that savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock ...*" (Acts 20:29-31). He also says to Timothy, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound*

*doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).*

My friends, these warnings will never be more relevant to us than right now, let us put aside these fables, and turn back to the truth. Book, chapter, and verse is the only way to know if you have the truth, so are you asking for it?

Scott Vanderwood