

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

Athletic Ministry

Scenario:

A proposal is being made to the congregation. Those making the proposal want to use the collection on the first day of the week to fund the building and to maintain a sports facility on the property where the congregation assembles. They want to start an “Athletic Ministry”.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

This Scripture is offered as authority for an “Athletic Ministry”: “I Corinthians 9:24-27: Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” It is then said: “Knowing our bodies are dwelling places for the Holy Spirit, our mission is to faithfully instruct and encourage disciples to honor God with their bodies through physical activities that will enhance spiritual, mental, emotional and physical growth and assist in serving the kingdom.”

A Later Statement Is Made:

It is proposed that this would allow the congregation to provide services such as: “A safe, Christ-centered environment where athletic skills can be learned and developed. Provide opportunities through athletics for bonding and mentorship relationships between mature members and our youth.”

For Discussion:

What do you see in those statements?

- From the jump, there is a problem. Why is there a “proposal” being made? God’s word fully equips us to every good work (**II Timothy 3:15-17**). God’s word is our standard (**Luke 4:4**). We are not supposed to look to man in going beyond the standard, the word of God (**I Corinthians 4:6**). If God wanted His money to be used for the building of buildings, He would have said so. We see that principle in place even under the Law of Moses (**II Samuel 7:1-7**).
- There are things clearly authorized in the word of God to be done with the funds we collect from the saints. The local church is authorized to use those funds to help needy saints (**Romans 15:25-27**, **I Corinthians 16:1-4**, and **II Corinthians 8:1-9:13**). The local church is authorized to support faithful evangelists (**I Corinthians 9:1-14**, **II Corinthians 11:8**, **Philippians 4:10-18**). The local church is authorized to support widows that are qualified for aid (**I Timothy 5:3-16**). The local church is are authorized to support faithful elders (**I Timothy 5:17-18**).

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- Anything that is proposed, in addition to what we have proven above to be done with the Lord's funds, is an addition to the Scriptures. Where does that leave the one making the proposal (**Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32, Proverbs 30:5-6, Galatians 1:6-9, and Revelation 22:18-19**).
- Whatsoever we (individually or collectively) say or do cannot be governed by our own will or ideas (**Proverbs 3:5-7, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 16:2, Proverbs 21:3, Isaiah 5:21, Luke 6:46, Romans 10:1-3, Romans 12:1-2, Romans 14:6-8, I Corinthians 10:31, II Corinthians 5:14-15, Colossians 1:10, Colossians 3:16-17, Titus 2:11-14, James 1:21-27, and Revelation 4:11**).
- It should be logical and reasonable, that if you are looking to start a "ministry" that never occurred in the Scriptures that you are doing something wrong! Sin is transgression of the Law of God (**I John 3:4**). That is true even if it "seems" to be right (**Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25**).
- We must look to the instructions of our Lord to learn HOW we are to please Him (**I Thessalonians 4:1-2 and II Timothy 1:13**). We must know, without doubt (**Romans 14:23**), that our actions are not only lawful, which is clearly necessary (**Ephesians 5:10**), but also expedient and edifying (**I Corinthians 10:23-33**).
- This person, in this scenario, is trying to use Scriptures. This person is guilty of using the Scriptures incorrectly. First, he is using the ESV perversion of the Scriptures. I have a brief study concerning the ESV which is linked below: https://www.wordsoftruth.net/WhytheKJVOvertheNIVNASBorESV_handout.pdf
- Now to the text he perverted. What Paul wrote was: *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"* (**I Corinthians 9:24-27**). He is teaching the Corinthians to finish the SPIRITUAL race they have begun to run (cf. **Hebrews 12:1-3**). Paul is not talking about physical exercise. He is not discussing the work of the congregation. No honest person, with any reasoning ability, could conclude otherwise. Twisting the Scriptures is sinful and the souls that do so are lost (**II Peter 3:15-17**).
- We must always be sure we are not doing things, even with good intentions, incorrectly. The end result of such is being lost eternally (**Matthew 7:21-23**).
- Stating that "our bodies" is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit is also a twist of Scriptures. While the Corinthians had such stated to them (**I Corinthians 6:12-20**), it does not apply to anyone today. In the first century saints were given the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**) through the laying on of the hands of an Apostle (**Acts 8:12-17, Acts 19:1-7, and Romans 1:11**). The Holy Spirit then equipped those saints with certain spiritual gifts (**I Corinthians 12:3-11**). Such does not occur today. For one, there are no Apostles. Secondly, the work of the Spirit of God through men has ceased (**I Corinthians 12:28-13:13**). Again, a twist of Scriptures.

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- Regarding taking care of our bodies... God says that an endeavor to eat right and exercise right is of little profit (**I Timothy 4:1-11**). Here is a study on that subject: https://www.wordsoftruth.net/bodilyexerciseprofitslittle_2019.html
- Furthermore, you are not going to address the spiritual man by appealing to carnal things (**John 6:1-66, Romans 8:5-8, Romans 13:14, Romans 14:17, Galatians 5:16-17, and I Peter 2:9-11**).
- Then the later statement appeals to human, worldly logic. Where you can find such logic in the Scriptures? Shouldn't we reject worldly wisdom (**I Corinthians 1:18-3:23**)? When we open the Scriptures and find this idea is not there, we cannot hold to it (**I Thessalonians 5:21**). If a building and program like this were godly and right, the Lord would have told us to do it. He would have also told us how to do it.
- Take the building of the temple as an example about how the Lord says what to do when He wants something built. God said when, where, by whom, and how to build the temple (**I Chronicles 28:1-21, I Kings 6:1-7:51, and II Chronicles 3:1-5:14**). He even gave instructions concerning the rebuilding of the destroyed temple (**Ezekiel 40:1-46:24; cf. Ezra 1:1-5**). When God wants something done He requires a pattern to be fulfilled in doing it (**Exodus 25:9, Exodus 25:40, and Hebrews 8:5**).
- Christ is the head of the church, the congregation (**Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:12-18**). The church is His house (**I Timothy 3:15 and Hebrews 3:1-6**). He purchased the church (**Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25**). Christ NEVER said anything about an "environment where athletic skills can be learned and developed. Provide opportunities through athletics for bonding and mentorship relationships between mature members and our youth." The Lord's body, the church, is no where near authorized to be involved in these community center types of work. This has been learned through the religious organizations founded by men, not by our Lord. This mentality is not new. The Lord was rejected by Israel as their king for the appointment of a man BECAUSE of what they saw others doing (**I Samuel 8:1-22**).
- If we want to address the emotional, physical, spiritual, etc. issues of man; we are supposed to use the Scriptures that provide us with all things pertaining to life and godliness (**II Peter 1:3-11**).
- Finally, in addition to the errors already addressed above, where does this all lead? This proposal is not considering what is really being affirmed (cf. **I Timothy 1:1-11**). Error leads to further error (**Galatians 5:7-9**). Conclusions, though not always foreseen, lead to further erring conclusions (i.e. **I Corinthians 15:12-34**). First the athletic ministry for the body and soul, then the food ministry, then the medical ministry, and on, and on, and on, and on... The logic used can then be applied to ANYTHING later. Like the errors of Jeroboam the son of Nebat (**I Kings 12:16-33**), these errors will continue for many generations and will wax worse and worse. If you read of the kings of Israel, you see they continued in Jeroboam's transgressions until those ten tribes in Israel were put away from the Lord (**II Kings 17:21-23**). We should learn from that (**Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-12**).