

**Shayla:** Are you opposed to para-church organizations or activities?

**Meforshim:**

We must recognize the central place the local church holds in God's program. The only visible institution established by the Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles other than the family unit was the local church. It is the local church that is described as the pillar and foundation of the truth.

- 1 Timothy 3:15 HCSB But if I should be delayed, *I have written* so that you will know how people ought to act in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

It was to the church, rather than any parachurch organization, that He gave the promise that the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

- Matthew 16:18 HCSB And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it.

It was to the church and for the benefit of the church that God gave the spiritual gifts.

- 1 Corinthians 12:28 HCSB 28 And God has placed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, next, miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, managing, various kinds of languages.

It was to the church elders that God commanded our obedient allegiance.

- Hebrew 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

The regular worship services are not to be missed according to the author of Hebrews.

- Hebrews 10:24-25 HCSB And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, 25 not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Nowhere in Scripture do we find a single example of some parachurch organization's usefulness. While this does not mean that these other Christian institutions that our traditions have allowed are without divine approval, it does mean that Christ's foremost concern is for the church. It means we must recognize that that is ALL they are – human traditions – and they must not take precedence over the Church's call.

- Matthew 15:3 HCSB He answered them, "And why do you break God's commandment because of your tradition?"
- Matthew 15:6 HCSB he does not have to honor his father.' In this way, you have revoked God's word because of your tradition.
- Mark 7:8-9 HCSB Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men." 9 He also said to them, "You completely invalidate God's command in order to maintain your tradition!"
- Mark 7:13 HCSB You revoke God's word by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things."
- Colossians 2:8 HCSB Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world, and not based on Christ.

As long as an organization or activity maintains its submission to God's program of using the church, supports the church, and enables the church then it will receive God's blessing. But when an organization or activity begins to pull God's people away from God's primary medium of the practice of their spiritual gifts, when those human traditions begin to drain resources from God's church, then they must be rejected.