

## Disaster Relief!

During the past few weeks there have been several disasters in Oklahoma, Texas, and Kentucky: Tornado and/or Flooding, that have destroyed homes and taken lives. Natural Disasters are common globally: depending on the seasons. As is true with many organizations that step up to the plate, so to speak, there are numerous faith-based organizations that rise to the occasion. These organizations commonly reside under a 501 (C) (3) non-profit organization.

To avoid being charged with attacking denominations that do not share equal doctrines the references made in this research will consider Disaster Relief projects professing a connection with churches of Christ. A brief web search identify more than one Disaster Relief organization advertised as being affiliated with Churches of Christ. The organization operates under a Board of Directors comprised (predominately) of elders, deacons, and preachers (present or past), each of which are affiliated with separate congregations. These organizations promote the work and solicit local churches to join their efforts by “telling Church of Christ congregations about the work of Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort.”

The purpose of the work, as stated by Project Unify has been described, thusly: “If we need to stop doing what we’re doing and drop everything to lead a study, that’s the reason we’re here ... so we can open a door so that we can teach the Gospel” (Project Unify), as well as the One Kingdom, that presents itself as “a ministry of the White’s Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., was working with churches in Swannanoa and Hendersonville, N.C., to serve food and deliver supplies from the White’s Ferry Road church. The organization was accepting donations...”

Questions: 1) Is an act of physical relief authorized in the scriptures? Yes (Lk. 10:27-37). 2) Is an atmosphere, in which biblical study can be accomplished, authorized? Yes (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

Question: 1) Is a collective (by the church) act of physical relief authorized in the scriptures? Yes (2 Cor. Acts 4; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8—9. 2) Is a collective (by the church) atmosphere, in which biblical study can be accomplished authorized in the scriptures? Yes (1 Cor. 14:26ff; Heb. 3:14, 10:24-25).

In these cases, the work begins with the individual and then the collective. In many cases, when a benevolent need arises the first response is to go “to the church.” In biblical form the process starts with the individual (or maybe more), and when the pocketbooks of the individuals are unable to assist then the collective can be justly called upon: the same can also be said of biblical instruction, and study: 1 Pet. 3:15.

Question: 1) Is a collective of churches authorized in the scriptures to pool their contributions to assist in community physical relief? Enter passage: \_\_\_\_\_. Individuals may be quick to reference the churches of Macedonia and Achaia in the relief sent to Jerusalem. However, note the instruction Paul gave to the churches: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come. And when I arrive, whomsoever ye shall approve (emph. mine, ret), them will I send with letters to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem: and if it be meet for me to go also, they shall go with me.” (1 Cor. 16:1-4). What Paul taught one group of brethren, he taught them all: “For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). 2) Is a collective of churches authorized in the scriptures to pool their contributions to assist in the biblical instruction, and study of the scriptures? Enter passage: \_\_\_\_\_. 3) The oversight, i.e., “The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you (emph. mine, ret), exercising the oversight...” (1 Pet. 5:1-2). The extent of the oversight of the elders are limited to the flock which is among them, and those who desire the office must meet the qualifications revealed in 1 Tim. 3:1-7. Do the scriptures authorize any other oversight arrangement? Enter passage: \_\_\_\_\_. 4) The Lord authorized the establishment of three organization: Family: Gen. 2:24; Government: Rom. 13:1-7; and the Church: Matt. 16:18 (universally), Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 5:1-2 (locally). The local church has an obligation to sound forth the word of the Lord: 1 Thess. 1:6-8. Is there any other organization, authorized in the scriptures to fulfill the sounding forth of the word of the Lord? Enter passage: \_\_\_\_\_. It is interesting that “churches” are not required to have a 501 (C) (3) to be tax free, but other organizations stating, “If we need to stop doing what we’re doing and drop everything to lead a study, that’s the reason we’re here ... so we can open a door so that we can teach the Gospel” (Project Unify) are required to do so.

Putting it all into perspective: Disaster Relief is an action common to all Christians. The disaster is a result of an individual’s actions regarding sin, (Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 5:12). As a result, man is subject to the wrath of God: Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6. Creating the “disaster,” i.e., Misfortune; mishap; calamity; any unfortunate event, especially a sudden misfortune as, we met with many disasters on the road” (Webster’s): In daily life, this admonition was given by the Lord, “Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

When Christians recognize the impact of the “good news,” i.e., the Gospel, 1) They will generally inform those closest to them, i.e., family: “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother...findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, ‘We have found the Messiah’...He brought him to Jesus” (John 1:40-42). 2) Understanding the consequences of sin, and salvation provided in Christ, Paul said, “Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade me” also saying, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again (2 Cor. 5:11, 14-15). 3) The result? “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:17-21). 4) Christians, collectively, “became imitators of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit; so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth; so that we need not to speak anything.” (1 Thess. 1:6-8).

When Christians, because they are “in Christ” and the “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16) are, as the brethren in Thessalonica, sounding “forth the word of God,” there is not an organization on the planet that can compete. The apostle Paul, and brethren throughout the centuries had one Disaster Relief message: “Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). ret