

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

Mr. Melbourn
2/2/81

Lecture 15

How to Plan and Organize Church Activities

I. Introduction

- A. The late Herbert W. Armstrong often intimated that his mother's favorite scripture was Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"
- B. Indeed, it may be the favorite scripture of many, for the wonderful feeling of total harmony that comes when brethren stand in close unity is one we all enjoy, as God Himself surely does.
- C. While, in the final analysis, unity comes from God's Spirit, nonetheless one of the best physical means of encouraging spiritual unity is through properly organized Church activities.

II. SPS

This lecture will describe how to properly organize and run Church activities.

III. Need

- A. Even though many of us have been involved with Church activities for years, we still need to learn or review this important information for numerous reasons:
 - 1. John 8:23 -- We, like Christ, are not of this world. As will be shown, Church activities should be handled according to God's principles, not those we may have learned in the churches of this world!
 - 2. We should all be upgrading our skills in this area since we are striving for actual perfection in all things, and not merely to do a "good enough" job (Matthew 5:48).
 - 3. God's government comes into play in Church activities in a direct way. The process and practice of God's government is an immensely

important subject that needs to be thoroughly understood as it relates to this and associated matters. This should be important to pastor, elder, deacon and layman alike.

4. I Corinthians 1:10 -- We are all to speak the same thing. Therefore, it is helpful to know what the Church considers standard procedure regarding Church activities so that we may all operate similarly and thus promote worldwide unity.

IV. The Improper Approach Used By This World

Although we are not a part of this world, we are called out from it and living in it (John 17:11). Hence we cannot help but have even our best-intentioned thinking influenced by our past associations. It is therefore good to see some of the mistakes this world makes so we can avoid them.

A. Churches of this world misunderstand the purposes of church activities.

1. Some churches seem to exist almost solely for the purpose of having activities, and hence become a sort of "social club."
2. Others use activities solely for fund raising and care little whether their own people profit personally, just so they make money for the church coffers.

B. Churches of this world don't understand God's government.

In many churches the minister's approval is virtually an afterthought and the whole process is run by the deacons or a board. Hence it is run like a democracy from the bottom up, with all the obvious evils this can introduce.

C. Wrong activities and atmosphere

Some churches of the world participate in wrong activities like gambling (e.g., bingo parties), rock-music concerts, etc. Others fall into the opposite ditch and disallow certain things that can be proper, like card playing, family films, etc.

And some socials are conducted in a wrong atmosphere, allowing improper behavior such as overdrinking, snobbery, cliques and dark or improperly lit dances

with various degrees of sexual promiscuity even tolerated at times. Probably many of these things have resulted from the influence that the entertainment media has had upon public attitude.

D. Romans 12:2 ("Be not conformed to this world")

In light of the wrong approaches used by this world, it behooves us to look to the Church for proper instruction on how to handle these things. We must see the example God is teaching us through the words and actions of Mr. Tkach and the headquarters team and not conform to the ways of this world.

V. The Important Purposes and Functions of Church Activities

Why does God's Church provide activities other than those involving worship directly? Church activities fill true needs in the congregations. Some of the purposes of Church activities follow.

A. Church activities promote character development.

We all know that our personal growth is enhanced when we mingle with others. The positive examples of others influence us and vice versa.

B. Church activities promote personality development.

While our character is the most important part of our make-up, our personality is also vital and in many ways is strengthened and broadened through social contacts with other believers.

C. They provide opportunities of service.

Since many jobs need to be done to make activities a success, members get a chance to serve and experience the rewards service brings.

D. They provide practical experience in utilizing God's government.

The organization and overseeing of an activity is a living lesson in how God's government should work.

E. They teach the values the Church embraces and thus illustrate and reinforce God's way of life.

F. They are enjoyable and provide positive fun and relaxation.

Hence they become a viable alternative to this world's often destructive entertainment forms.

G. They develop social graces.

Many in God's Church have come from common backgrounds where the social graces receive little attention. Through activities we can learn how to talk, walk, socialize, dress and even eat properly when with others (Romans 13:7-8).

H. They promote fellowship.

By being with others of similar belief, we can draw closer and uplift one another in the faith. Hebrews 10:25 -- This is one way we can meet together more often. See also I John 3:1-3.

I. They promote Church unity (I Corinthians 12:12-20).

As stated at the beginning of this lecture, all of the above purposes are forces that work together to build joyful unity in the church congregations and hence the whole Church worldwide.

J. What Church activities are not to become:

1. Dating service -- While the Church strives to provide wholesome opportunities for singles to mix, Church activities do not exist solely to provide dating opportunities!
2. Babysitting service -- While it is OK for some activities to be just for children, it is wrong to constantly separate children from parents or use Church activities as a dumping ground for toddlers while the parents go off by themselves (Malachi 4:5-6).
3. Social club -- All activities are secondary to the primary purposes of the Church and should never be too frequent or get out of proportion.
4. Money drain -- The members of God's Church have many important commitments of their available funds, not the least of which is tithes and offerings. Activities should not become a drain on the people financially.
5. Time drain -- Activities should not consume too much time, either for the participant or the organizers. Our first priority is to the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:15-16).

VI. The Special Responsibility Falling to Those Who Must Oversee and Organize Church Activities

As can be seen from the sheer number of purposes and functions of Church activities, one who is involved in the planning of these affairs shoulders a tremendous responsibility.

- A. He is actively involved in people's lives and may influence them more than a person who gives a sermonette or helps in a Bible study. Throughout the preparation and execution of the activity he can inspire, motivate, develop, teach, direct, serve and be served.
- B. The world pays high salaries to those men and women in business who can manage people and organizations well, and for good reason. They realize the responsibility such managerial skills entail. Certainly we too should consider these points seriously (II Samuel 23:1-4).

VII. How to Plan, Organize, Direct and Control Church Activities

I Corinthians 14:33 -- God is not the author of confusion, and hence is not the author of disorganized Church activities. No one is born knowing how to properly coordinate Church activities. We must be taught by both example and instruction. The following outline can serve as a step-by-step blueprint to follow for taking most activities from the initial idea stage to the completed activity.

A. Planning

The first stage in any activity is planning. Too many activities go astray because the leaders do not have a plan. God has a master plan that He follows and reveals to us. Why should we not, also? The planning stage can itself be broken down into steps.

1. The idea

Of course, every activity begins with an idea, which begets a firm decision to have an activity. Perhaps the idea will originate with the pastor or his assistant. If it begins with you, then realize that the idea itself is a type of service. But don't forget that the decision to have or not have it is up to the pastor. Don't grumble if he decides against it.

2. The appointment of an activity coordinator

After the idea is approved, the pastor will appoint a coordinator. Perhaps it will be you. Or, he may feel the activity involved requires his own personal guidance and he will decide to make himself the chairman for the event. At any rate, be supportive of the person he picks, even though it may not be you and you came to him with the original idea. Headquarters allows him latitude in these types of decisions.

3. The formulation of basic purposes and goals for the activity

This step is really the actual planning process itself. Some of this -- especially for minor or small activities -- may merely be a mental description of what the activity should be. But the best plans are committed to paper. The plan should state the type of activity, its purpose, the goals you wish to attain by means of the activity, the date agreed upon, the place, the time and a brief listing of the steps necessary to organize and direct the activity.

This doesn't mean there must be some deep, profound spiritual goal for each activity. It could be only one of those mentioned above. Many times, Church activities simply provide opportunities for Christian fellowship, which of itself is of no small importance.

4. The budget

Most activities cost money. As part of your plan you should make estimates about the costs and incomes involved and lay these out clearly for the pastor.

5. Approval

At this stage, as well as many other points in the process, you should approach the church pastor, show him your plans or explain them to him and ask for his approval. Be flexible and make the changes he suggests. He is the one ultimately in charge of the church area and responsible for its success. Don't buck his leadership or display an "I-know-better" attitude.

B. Organization

Although the organizational phase of the activity is really a type of planning, it is so important that it is usually considered separately. Simply stated, when you divide your plan into separate areas of responsibility, you are organizing it.

The organization of most activities uses the committee approach. That is, the person in charge of the activity appoints others to head up the various major areas of the project and delegates certain responsibilities to them. This usually requires a number of steps.

1. Areas of Responsibility

The project is divided into logical areas of responsibility. These may include setup, cleanup, decorations, transportation, finances, food or refreshments, lodging, entertainment, construction, picture taking, article write-up, hall procurement, etc.

2. Committee Heads

Committee heads are chosen for each area of responsibility. This is one area in which your pastor will want to be involved. Unless given permission, in no case should you appoint people to jobs without obtaining the pastor's approval first. You may find yourself deeply embarrassed when you try to explain why the pastor will not allow a man to lead an area.

3. Meetings

The committee meets. Each man learns his responsibilities, the time schedule, his budget and other limits he may work within. He in turn often appoints others to help him. He should be informed whether he needs approval before appointing personnel, and if so, from whom.

By the way, you might want to consider using YOU members on some crews so that they gain valuable experience that will help them in managing their own activities.

C. The Directing Phase

Once the planning and organizing is underway, the coordinator must begin to direct the continuing

efforts of those under him as they carry out the pastor-approved plan. Usually this consists of various instructions, or guidelines, given at periodic meetings of the main committees headed by the coordinator of the main committees headed by the coordinator or directed to the appropriate people via telephone.

D. The Execution

When the day and time comes for the activity, it should unfold smoothly according to the plan. The success of this stage of the activity -- the activity itself -- will depend directly on how effectively the coordinator has planned, organized and directed.

But even with perfect planning, the coordinator should himself be present at the activity from setup to cleanup so he is available to answer questions and troubleshoot. It goes without saying that his attitude, approach and demeanor at this time should be a living example of God's way. And, when confronted by decisions beyond his level of authority, he should seek out the pastor and get his answer.

E. Follow-up

Although not necessary for all types of activities, it can be helpful to have a short meeting of the committee heads after an activity is over to discuss its success. Helpful suggestions can be received, which will make future activities a success. This should not degenerate into a griping session, but rather be constructive in tone and attitude.

VIII. The Necessity of Activities to Reflect God's Way of Life

Over and over in this lecture we have stressed the difference between the way this world runs its activities and the way we in God's Church do. In this subsection, though, we need to further stress some important aspects of God's way that we must consider in planning Church activities.

A. Atmosphere

The atmosphere this world provides is wrong (overly dark, dingy, smoke-filled rooms with too-private corners, too-loud music of the wrong type, wild behavior, people "letting go"). The atmosphere we provide should be uplifting, inspiring and positive. With proper music at proper volume and properly lit

premises (not necessarily total light, however) fitting to the occasion (I Peter 4:3-5).

B. Quality

Ambassador College reflects quality. God is a God of quality. Within our budget, balance and the nature of the occasion, we should strive for appropriate quality in all activities.

C. Family

Activities of this world tend to split up the family into subgroups of adults and children. While it is not wrong to have occasional all-adult or all-teen activities, they should as a rule be geared to bring the family together (Malachi 4:5-6).

D. Minority Needs

In this world, the needs of minority groups are ignored until they put up a fuss and attract attention. In our activities, we should be sensitive to the unique needs of the elderly, the young, the poor, the handicapped, the out-of-towner, the shy or timid and others. Matthew 25:31-46 -- God is sensitive to the needs of special groups, and we should be, too.

E. Entertainment

We need to avoid sloppy, poorly prepared, unrehearsed entertainment, which is an embarrassment to all.

F. Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages are permitted at adult functions, but people should be cautioned about balance, and no drunkenness should be tolerated (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:18). That alcoholic beverages are not necessary to have a successful Church activity should be obvious. The majority of activities should not present them as a choice. However, alcohol is certainly appropriate at club graduations or an annual dance.

G. Legal Responsibilities

We must at all times adhere to the applicable laws of our area and the rules of the facility we may rent. For example, if it is illegal for people under a certain age to drink, or if drinking is not permitted in the hall we rent for a dance, then we should abide

by the rules, even though God's law would allow it.
(Romans 13:1-7).

IX. Church Activities and God's Government

As stated numerous times, Church activities are an ideal exercise in God's government. And it is important to point out that God's government goes far beyond the principle that God's government is from the top down. Here are some more important principles about government that we must learn from Church activities.

A. Top Down

This means that the pastor is in charge of all activities, even if he has delegated the specific oversight to someone else. Further, it means that the pastor himself must conform to guidelines that headquarters issues (Ephesians 4:11-13).

B. Teaching

The fact that Church government is from the top down implies that those at the top teach those under them, and don't merely order them around (II Timothy 2:1-2).

C. Learning

In like manner, those under the pastor and his assistants should realize that they are in their positions to serve and learn from those above (Proverbs 1:5).

D. Serving

God's system is not one of lordship, but of selfless service. This attitude should be reflected at all levels (Matthew 20:25-28).

E. Teamwork

God's Church is not one member, but a body of members working together in harmony. Each person should remember this vital analogy and strive to fit into the team so it works smoothly (Ephesians 2:19-22, I Corinthians 12:12-27).

F. Communication

Communication is vital to any endeavor of God or man. God considers communication so important that one of the members of the Godhead is named "the Communicator"

(the Word). We, too, should realize the importance of good communication.

X. Conclusion

In all areas of life, God's way is vastly different from man's way. This principle is no less true in the matter of how to plan, organize and run Church activities. When we as a Church work together in harmony to provide balanced Church activities in accord with God's will and way, we reap the wonderful unity of the brethren, which David so highly praised in the Psalms and which God and we so deeply value.

