

Is The Home An “Evangelistic Organization”?

Tim Haile

Some brethren have cited *the home* as authority to form, fund and function through, non-church evangelistic organizations. This argument is cited in the ongoing effort to prove that the local church is not the only evangelistic *organization* that is authorized by God (see 1 Tim. 3:15). At first, I dismissed the argument due to its obvious and inherent flaws. For example, the “home” is a *relationship*; not an *organization*! How can a *relationship* be cited as authority for an *organization*? I considered the “home” argument to be simplistic and weak in comparison with others that were being made, so I have answered the others first. What I had not expected was for Christians to actually be swayed by the home argument. I now see the need to answer the argument.

1. **Defining terms:** The word “home” is used in different ways, both by God and by men. The Greek word “*oikos*” often refers to a domicile in which people live. But the word is also used, by metonymy, to describe the *family members* of a particular house. Acts 16:34 uses the term in both of these ways. In the discussion of the home as an “evangelistic organization,” brethren are using the term to describe the **family** members of a certain household. And though they are talking about “family” when they allege the home to be an “evangelistic organization,” they use the word “home.” There is an obvious reason for this. Certain practices in the history of God’s people make it much easier for people to view a “home” as an “organization” than to view a “family” as an “organization.” Past defenders of church financial support of human institutions have made this use of the term. They have used the term “home” to describe various self-governing benevolent societies and institutions. The term “home” is thus used to describe *organizations* that do works that the members of some churches want their churches to support. History repeats itself (Eccl. 1:9). Now, some professed *non-institutional* brethren are using the word “home” to describe a non-church religious organization that functions in the realm of the local church. Does this sound familiar?
2. **The Bible uses the word “family,” “house” (home), or “household” to describe ungodly and apostate homes, as well as those that follow God.** By describing the home as an “evangelistic organization,” one *defines* a home as an organization that preaches the gospel. This claim necessarily means that a family relationship is not a “home” unless it is *evangelistic*. However, the Bible does use the term family (home) to describe non-evangelistic homes. Some homes reject the gospel (Matt. 10:13). Others apostatize (Tit. 1:11). Are these “homes” also evangelistic organizations? If “the home is an evangelistic organization,” then gospel-rejecting homes are “evangelistic” homes!

Obviously, those who refuse to give up the “home” argument need to at least refine it, and qualify it. The argument in its present is based upon a blatantly false statement. Jesus taught that there will be some homes in which *some* members hold to the truth and other members *oppose the truth* (Matt. 10:36). Are these homes also “evangelistic organizations?” Or is it rather, that some members of such homes are evangelistic while others are not? It is the later, and this is precisely the point. The fact that some individual family members may preach the gospel does not make their home an “evangelistic organization!” Given the broad use of the word “home” in the New Testament, it is not accurate to say that “the home is an evangelistic organization.” Such is not the language of Scripture. It is a contrivance. It is a concoction of those who are attempting to justify a practice for which they have no Scripture. The members of some homes may evangelize, but this evangelizing is done by individuals, not by a home *organism*.

3. **If the home is an “evangelistic organization,” when does it become such?** Is it when *one* member becomes a Christian? Is it when *some* members become Christians? Must the husband and wife both be Christians in order for the home to be classified as an “evangelistic organization?” What about homes in which the wife is a Christian, but the husband is not? Are these homes also evangelistic organizations? If so, an alien sinner would be the “head” of those “evangelistic organizations.” Or must *all* family members be Christians? Before you answer, please have your Scripture ready. (I won’t hold my breath waiting for the passage).
4. **The consequences of faulty classification:** Some readers of this article will be familiar with the various arguments that are being used to defend individually supported evangelistic organizations. Many of these arguments are made in the book, *“We Have a Right,”* and its “Revised” edition, which is edited by Mike Willis and Dan King. In particular, their “Jesus-group” and “Synagogue” arguments defend the right of human evangelistic organizations to be funded by donations from individual saints. Guardian of Truth Foundation has itself solicited and received such funds over the course of its history, thus demonstrating that the arguments by its members are not purely academic. Let the reader understand that the “home” argument is being made in the same classification, to justify the same practice that men are trying to justify by the *Jesus-group* and *Synagogue* arguments. This means that the “home,” functioning *under* and *through* its head (husband/father) may solicit money from others (per the *Jesus-group* & *Synagogue* arguments) for the purpose of conducting evangelistic work. To state the argument is to answer it. If the “home,” by divine design, is “an evangelistic organization,” then *every home* is such an evangelistic organization. Who will be the financial

supporters of these organizations? The Bible teaches that the wife and children are to submit to the head of the home, so family members would be obligated to support their own (family) "organization," and not others. If all homes (families) are "evangelistic organizations," then the only people left to support all of these organizations would be true widows and orphans! All other people would have financial obligations to their own "organization." This is the type of absurdity to which one's position is reduced when he abandons the high and lofty ways and thoughts of God, and resorts to his own reasonings. He flails about in a Scriptureless sea, and the very best that he can hope to do is to concoct an argument that at least *appears* to be scriptural. As I shall demonstrate, the argument is inaccurate and ill-conceived, and the consequences of the argument are immensely dangerous.

5. **The home is a *relationship* - not an *organization*:** A person can say or allege just about anything, but that doesn't make it right. I am surprised at how many veteran gospel preachers either *don't know*, or *won't acknowledge* the difference between an "organization" and a "relationship." The leaders and defenders of various human religious organizations have been notorious for making wild and outlandish claims about various Bible subjects, usually out of their need to protect themselves, or to advance their peculiar agenda. But children of God demand that claims be substantiated by Scripture (1 Pet. 4:11; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21). Ephesians 5:22-24 does teach that the husband is the "head" of the wife, and that she is to be "subject" to him. And 1 Timothy 3:4 teaches that his children are to also be "in subjection" to him, but what is the nature of this headship? Is he the "head" in the same way that one might be a *president* or *CEO* of some type of business organization? Does his wife serve as his *vice president*, *secretary* or *treasurer*? And what about the children? What is their office? Are they members of a *board of trustees*? No. The home is a *relationship*, not an *organism*. In that relationship the various members of the family have different responsibilities to fulfill towards each another. One of these responsibilities is for *parents to train their children*. If this constitutes "evangelism," it certainly isn't done by some home organization: It is done by the parents. The children *receive* the training. They are the *trainees*, not the *trainers*, as would be the case if they functioned as an organization.
6. **"Headship" does not necessarily imply "organization."** To argue that the home is an "organization" is to argue that the Godhood is also an organization. Paul gives us a lesson on headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3 - "*But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of every woman is man; and the head of Christ is God.*" Notice that in making his point about the position of woman in relation to man, Paul says that "God" (the

Father) is the “head” of Christ. Does Paul here mean that the Godhead is an *organization*? Is there organizational structure among the persons of God? No. Each person has a different role, and these roles are executed in relation to each other. In His role as a *servant* and *Son*, Jesus submitted to the will of His Father (Jn. 6:38; Phil. 2:7,8; Heb. 5:8,9). This is the sense in which Jesus claimed the Father to be “greater” than Himself (Jn. 14:28). The same is true with the home: Each person has his own role and duties. The wife and children do not function *through* the husband/father, but in relation to him. They submit to him.

7. The Home is a Social Relationship; Not an “Evangelistic Organization.”

As I stated earlier, not all homes are composed of Christians. But even if we consider homes in which the members are Christians, the duties and responsibilities of those members involve the social, and not just the spiritual. Husbands and wives may work and pray together as “*heirs together of the grace of life*” (1 Pet. 3:7), but they also engage in sexual relations together (1 Cor. 7:2-5), both for pleasure (Prov. 5:15-19) and for procreation (Gen. 1:28). Thinking of this last passage, we are reminded that God formed the “home” when He formed the woman as a companion for the man in the marriage relationship (Gen. 2:24). The man and woman were told to “*be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth*” and “*subdue*” other creatures. The original mission of the home was not evangelistic, but social. Fathers are to bring up their children in the training and discipline of the Lord (Eph. 6:4), attending to their spiritual needs, but they are to also provide for their *physical* needs (1 Tim. 5:8). “Parents lay up (save up) for their children” (2 Cor. 12:14). Conversely, children are to “honor” their parents (Eph. 6:2), which includes providing **physical** support and sustenance for parents who can’t provide for themselves (1 Tim. 5:4). And though he emphasizes the value of *spiritual training over physical training*, Paul does acknowledge that “*physical training does have some value*” (1 Tim. 4:8). Since this physical exercise is a function of the individual (not of the church, as some allege), parents may provide healthy exercise and recreation for their children. Parents are to also train their children to work, so that they may know how to provide for themselves (2 Thess. 3:10), their own families (1 Tim. 5:8), for others (Eph. 4:28), and as noted above, for their own parents (1 Tim. 5:4). These things are **social**. Yes, some members of the home may teach the gospel to others, but the nature of the home is a social. It is not an evangelistic organization.

8. Dangerous consequences with respect to church supported evangelism: For almost a hundred and sixty years, battles have been fought over the practice of church support of evangelistic organizations. Many of us have argued that God instituted and specified the local church as His

evangelistic organization (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Thess. 1:8; Acts 13:1-3), and no New Testament authority can be found for a church to support another organization to preach the gospel. Yet, if the home is an "evangelistic organization," that is precisely what happens if a family man is supported to preach the gospel! As "head" of his evangelistic "organization," his support money would go into the "treasury" of his "organization." As with all "organisms," he, as "head," could assign evangelistic roles and disperse funds to other members of his "organization" (family). This would mean that he could use this money to send out and support his sons on evangelistic missions in the same way that other evangelistic organizations send out and support men to various mission fields. And if it is right for a church to financially support one missionary organization, why would it be wrong for it to support another?

9. **Dangerous consequences with respect to church supported**

benevolence: For almost sixty years, battles have been also fought over the practice of church funding of benevolent societies (organizations). Many of us have shown from the Scriptures that autonomous local churches are to oversee and administer their own benevolent work, and they are not to cede control and oversight of funds to other organizations. However, this exactly what is done in church benevolent care for families, if the home is an "organization." If it is right for a church to give money to one organization, then it is right for it to give money to another. In reality, the home is not an organization. Any benevolent care that is provided by the church to a family is provided to supply the *needs* of family *members*, not to fund an organization, for the family is no organization.

Conclusion

False practices are driving people to make irresponsible arguments, redefine the most basic institutions, and misrepresent the simplest and plainest of Bible truths. God has spoken with regard to the method by which Christians may organize in the performance of evangelistic work - it is called the local church. Anyone who questions this should just read the New Testament. God *Himself* used the local church when he wanted certain men for special evangelistic work (Acts 13:1-4). Interestingly, when they left on their journey, we are told that "the church" sent them out (verse 3), and then we are told that the "Holy Spirit" sent them out (verse 4). Harmony is found in the fact that the Holy Spirit sent out evangelists *through the local church*. God used the local church for His evangelistic organization, and we should too.

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