

By Permission Of The Local Church

By Dr. Donald Wildmon

Local churches have a lot of influence. Let me prove my point in making that statement. In the parable that follows, I borrow the "open by permission..." concept from the late Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer.

Recently, while visiting a building where abortions were performed, I saw a sign on the front door which read: "Open by permission of the local churches in this community."

I walked down the street and passed an "adult" theater, then I passed by a local video outlet where porn movies were rented. On the front door of both stores was a sign which read: "Open by permission of the local churches in this community."

On down the road I came upon one of the favorite hangouts of the youth. There they could get their beer, alcohol and drugs. I was amazed when I looked on the door of that hangout and saw the sign: "Open by permission of the local churches in this community."

When I walked into a store and saw all the pornographic magazines being sold in that store, I noticed a sign on the magazine rack which read: "These magazines are sold by the permission of the local churches in this community."

I turned on my television and was amazed at the violence, the vulgarity, the profanity, the sheer filth flowing into the room via that television set. Then a message trailed across the screen: "Open by permission of the local churches in this community."

One of my children brought home this notice from the school system: "This is to inform you that effective immediately the school system will begin distributing condoms to students. We will not notify parents when we do this as that would violate the rights of the students. We also are instituting a program to introduce our students to homosexuality. We feel that we must not be judgmental toward the life-style of others. Your child will not have the choice of opting out of the classes in which we present a non-judgmental view of homosexuality. To allow the child to miss these classes would only perpetuate bigotry by those who do not accept the homosexual life-style." Printed in small letters at the bottom of the notice were these words: "These programs made possible by permission of the local churches in this community."

I picked up my newspaper one morning and read that my city council had passed a law making it illegal for anyone to refuse to rent an apartment to homosexuals and unmarried individuals who live together, to refuse to hire or fire anyone because he is homosexual, or to discriminate against anyone because of his "sexual preference" life-style. One of the members of the council said the new law was passed "by permission of the local churches in this community."

When I asked my pastor how the churches got all of this influence, he said it was really quite simple. "We gained our influence by withdrawing. Because we give our permission, those who would oppose us have agreed to ignore us. We give our permission to the situations you mentioned so that the church can deal with more important matters," my pastor told me.

"What are these more important matters the local churches now deal with?" I asked.

"Oh, matters such as when to have fellowship supper at the church, who will bring which dishes of food. Matters such as the color of carpet in the sanctuary, the kind of lock which needs to go on the back door, who will serve as ushers next month, where and when the women's group will meet, organizing a softball team for our youth, how to raise the money our denomination expects us to give to keep their programs going," the pastor said. "By dealing with these more important matters and avoiding the issues where some in the community might disagree with us, we are able to keep our influence. Those around us have given us permission to exist if we keep our activities confined to the church building or denominational structure," my pastor said.

"We have an unspoken agreement with abortionists, the pornographers, those who provide filth and violence on television, the rap music which calls for the killing of police and white people, and the promotion of homosexuality. The agreement is with all those who seek to remove the Christian influence from our society. Very simply it is this - you don't bother us and we won't bother you," my pastor said.

I asked my pastor about such things as racism, poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and gambling. He said that those were "social" problems which government should deal with, and nearly everyone agreed. Plus, he said, from time to time the very top levels of the various denominations will issue a statement concerning those matters - usually calling on government to do more. That, also, leaves the church free to work on those more important matters, he said.

So you see, the local church really does have a lot of influence. The next time you see any of the situations I mentioned in your community, just remember that they exist "by permission of the local churches" which refuse to get involved.

Perhaps this is what Jesus foresaw when He said: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

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