

The Work of the Church

Christians have God-given work to do, both individually and collectively. While there is much overlap, passages such as 1 Timothy 5:16 clearly indicate a difference between the two. What does the Bible teach about our collective work?

Spiritual

The Bible teaches that God ordained specific tasks for churches to perform. First-century congregations:

(1) Preached the gospel at home and abroad (1 Th. 1:8). This was done through instruction given in worship assemblies (1 Cor. 14:24-25), by people talking to those with whom they had contact (Acts 8:4), and by sending men out to preach (Ph. 4:15-16).

(2) Built up the members of the congregation. Everything done in worship was to be unto edification (1 Cor. 14:26). Elders, spiritual shepherds, were charged with feeding the flock (Acts 20:28). Even severing association was an act of seeking to restore the erring (1 Cor. 5).

(3) Provided for needy brethren, either at home (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35) or abroad (1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rom. 15:26). This third area, unlike the others, was not necessarily ongoing, but as needed. Since the church is a spiritual relationship, it is no surprise that its work is in the spiritual realm.

So much of what modern churches do is conspicuously absent from the pages of the New Testament. The Bible makes no reference to churches operating schools or day care centers, providing recreational facilities and opportunities, being in the health care business, being a source for counseling and all sorts of social services, or even being a general charity.

The fact that something seems like a good thing to us is no justification for altering God's plan. Neither do we have any right to employ carnal means to attract more people. See John 6 for the result.

Equipped

The Bible teaches that Christ equipped the church to accomplish everything He wants it to do. "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 3:11-12).

God's provisions are simple, yet sufficient. It is only when we try to involve the church in an unauthorized activity that we find our resources or organization inadequate. Make no mistake: any argument that says we must go beyond the New Testament model for churches in order to be effective is a denial of the sufficiency of God's design!

Independent

The Bible teaches that each church governs itself, planning and executing its own work in keeping with Christ's directions. Elders' oversight is limited to the flock among them (1 Pet. 5:2). No New Testament church ever directed the work of another, wholly or in part. None ever planned a work beyond its ability to carry out. Each did what it could.

No New Testament church ever paid a human institution to do its work for it. There were no add-on organizations, no subsidiary "ministries," no missionary boards or societies.

Let us be busy doing God's work in God's way.

- by Frank Himmel

Identifying False Teachers — and Avoiding Fellowship with Them

Through every generation of God's people, one warning has remained the same: *beware of false teachers*. This danger is not new. It reaches all the way back to the garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and it continues because the devil continues his work. Yet in our time, many seem strangely hesitant to speak plainly about error. Some think it is "unkind," "harsh," or "unloving" to identify false teachers and take the actions the Scriptures command. But the Bible speaks with unmistakable clarity.

Paul told the elders at Ephesus that “grievous wolves” would arise—some from outside, some from inside—“speaking perverse things” and drawing disciples away (Acts 20:29–30). Peter warned that false teachers would secretly bring in destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1). John urged Christians to “test the spirits” because many false teachers had already gone out into the world (1 John 4:1). These are not theoretical dangers. They are warnings from God about real threats to real souls.

One of Satan’s most effective tactics has always been to blur the lines. If he can convince us that error is “not that serious,” or that exposing it is somehow contrary to love or unity, he has already won half the battle. But God does not leave us guessing. Romans 16:17 commands us to “mark” those who cause divisions by teaching things “contrary to the doctrine which you have learned”—and to “avoid them.” Ephesians 5:11 tells us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them.” And 2 John 9–11 warns that the one who simply encourages a false teacher becomes a “partaker” in his evil works.

Some recoil at such plain teaching. They insist, “Just preach the truth and leave everything else alone.” But preaching the truth *includes* warning about error. When Christians refuse to identify false teaching—whether about salvation, worship, morality, or any other Bible subject—they fail in their God-given duty to contend for the faith (Jude 3).

Why does all this matter so much? Because souls are at stake. False doctrine destroys. It turns people away from Christ (Galatians 1:6–9), undermines faith (2 Timothy 2:16–18), and leads to eternal ruin. If we truly love God, love truth, and love souls, we will not speak vaguely or timidly. We will plainly identify error, mark those who teach it, refuse fellowship with them, and stand firmly on the side of truth.

Silence is not kindness. Fellowship with error is not unity. Real love—and real obedience—compel us to hold fast to the truth and boldly warn against anything that threatens it.

- by Greg Gwin