

## "The Work of the Church"

The church has always been God's creation, and it's a great family and ministry. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're exploring the work of the church.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God is wise and always does what is best for His children. As a good Father, He provides teaching that protects and guides His children. Thankfully, as the Lord's church we are a family. The church is truly a blessing! The Lord through the Word has instructed His church what it should do to save mankind, to worship, to organize, and to show His love to the world. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Today is a special. I began working with In Search of the Lord's Way 17 years ago. They've been wonderful years but they've passed by quickly. I'm grateful for all the viewers and listeners to this program, to those who pray for us, and to my colleagues who work in this ministry. We strive to preach the truth in love. And in the 45 years of broadcasting, we have never asked for money. God has always provided for our needs as we strive to do His will. 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 8 says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

Everything we do here is for the local church. We help people every week to find a local congregation where they worship and serve the Lord. Assembling with God's people is important. And we know some people are confined to home due to health reasons and other problems, but we encourage everyone who can attend worship to do so with a local church of Christ. Though some think little of organized religion, they're missing out on the love, fellowship, and purpose of what God intends for His church to be.

Now we offer this study on, The Work of the Church, free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Ephesians 4:11 to 16, and examine what we can do to do the work of the church.

Our reading is from the book of Ephesians chapter 4 verses 11 through 16. And talk about the work of the church.

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; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

That's what God would have all of us to do. Growing up knowing the truth and working. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're grateful for Your love. We're grateful for the work that You have done

in our lives. And help us to be workers with You and workers for You. Help us to reach the lost and to bring those who are erring back to the truth. In Jesus name, Amen.

The church is composed of people committed to the Lord Jesus by their obedience to the gospel. Christians were first known as disciples who listened and learned from the Lord, repented of their sins, and were baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Now according to the book of Acts, the disciples were men and women old enough to believe and repent. They chose to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, and to follow the Lord. Now there's a difference between Christians in name only and authentic, practicing Christians.

Jesus revealed those whom God calls disciples. First, the Lord Jesus defined authentic Christians from people who call themselves Christians. John 8:31 to 32 He says about those who were Jews who believed in Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.'" Now we can't call ourselves true disciples, if we don't know what Jesus taught. Authentic disciples are students of the word and students of the Lord who seek the Lord and are willing to obey Him. Jesus said that, "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18 verse 37). Sadly many who call themselves Christians today, listen to human traditions, pop psychology, and doctrines never found in Scripture.

The Lord Jesus, second, defined true disciples who are Christians and they love one another. The Lord Jesus said in John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Yes love for others is necessary to discipleship. And if you don't love others, you can't be a true disciple.

Third, the Lord Jesus revealed that you can tell true disciple by whether or not they produce fruit by living what they believe. The Lord said in John 15:8 to 10, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." We produce fruit by keeping the Lord's commandments, by functioning as the church, the body of Christ we're going to stay close to Him. Now you might ask how Christians do this. Well, here are some things that God desires from us.

First, the church should be involved in the ministry of preaching the gospel to the lost.

The Lord Jesus said to His apostles in Matthew 28:18 to 20, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." They were to teach others what they were to do. The apostles were sent with a message and they must train others to teach that message to all nations till the end of the world.

The Lord also said in Mark 16:15 to 16, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." We have a responsibility to teach the gospel to the lost in every corner of this created world. And I'm thankful this mission was for all the world, because that includes the new world, where we now live.

Paul could say in Romans 1:14 to 16, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

There are many ways to teach and preach the gospel. We do it through preaching, radio, television, literature, the internet. We do it in our assemblies and through private studies. We do it through our behavior as Christians and our examples to the lost. Churches, as the body of Christ, are in the business of reaching out to the lost souls and bringing them to Jesus and to eternal life. Now every Christian should find some means to teach the lost or help others to do so. One of the best means is to bring people to our assemblies.

Salvation in Christ washes, sanctifies, and justifies! 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11 says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (and then he says) Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

Bringing people to Christ is a ministry of reconciliation to God. Sin separates us from God, but the blood of Christ and the gospel brings us back to the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:17 to 19 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (and then he says) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

The cross of Christ has given us the hope of God's grace and favor. This is why we preach Christ crucified. Churches show how God condemns sin, yes, but he does so, so that people will repent and obey the Lord. People must respond to God's grace to be saved. 2 Corinthians 5:20 to 21 continues, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him (that is God made Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus died for your sins, so that you could be right with God.

Second, the church should edify or build one another up spiritually. Ephesians 4:11 to 12 says, "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." God didn't want His church to be led astray by the false doctrines of the world. He wanted His people to be mature spiritually. "As a result, we're no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (that's Ephesians 4:14 to 15).

Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 and verse 2. He said, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." I tell you nothing can substitute for serious Bible study and the teaching that comes from those who are wise, Bible scholars who stay with the word. The Scriptures keep us strong in faith, and prayer and it keeps us close to God.

Now assembling to worship means we can strengthen one another and that's vital to the Christian life. Hebrews 10:23 to 25 urges us, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

The time we spend studying God's word, singing, praying, giving of our means, and partaking of the Lord's Supper is vital to our souls. And those who stop assembling lose the blessings of the mutual strength that comes from brothers and sisters of like faith. They lose the stimulation to love and to do good works. They miss the opportunities that come from spiritual training. I tell you we all need each other to be stronger and better prepared to meet the challenges of life.

Third, the church should strive to keep the saved right with God. People who were once saved can leave the truth and lose their salvation. Yes they can. It's not the person who starts out strong but the one who remains faithful and involved that is saved. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, "it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." The Lord told the persecuted at Smyrna in Revelation 2 and verse 10, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

Those who are mature and spiritual need to watch out for those who are young and weak as they face the challenges of sin and the things of this world. Young Christians often make bad decisions and they need encouragement and teaching. Galatians 6 and verse 1 says, "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted." 2 Timothy 2 and verse 24 to 26 continues, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

Yes, a child of God can lose his salvation, if he turns away from the Lord. And so we must bring those who stray back to God. James 5:19 to 20 says, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Now just as the father opened his arms to the Prodigal son, so we should welcome back those who come home and reach out for them.

Fourth, Christians provide for those in need. Galatians 6:9 to 10 says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." 1 Timothy 6 verses 17 to 19 says, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

I tell you how we live as Christians matter it matters! Christianity is a life of doing good. A life of caring for others and teaching. Jesus healed the sick, He fed the hungry, He lifted up the oppressed, He freed the captives from sin, but He also taught them the truth. He showed them how to live godly and righteous lives. And wherever He went, broken lives transformed into productive people. Slaves of sin became slaves of righteousness. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." Are you working for the Lord?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father help always to love You from all our hearts. To serve You and to serve others. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you aren't devoted to Christ Jesus and His truth, willing to deny yourself, willing to take up your cross daily, and willing to follow Him in every way for the rest of your life, then you aren't living up to being a disciple. The Lord's church is more than a social club. Loving others is important, but truly

hearing the truth and producing fruit are also necessary to be a true disciples. If you don't believe what Jesus teaches in Scripture, you really don't believe in Jesus. And if you don't practice what the Lord instructs, you aren't following Christ.

Being in a religious group that calls itself Christian isn't the same as truly following the Lord. Many groups that say they are Christians follow doctrines and practices of the sixth or the sixteenth century. You cannot follow the world's beliefs and follow the words of Jesus at the same time. Authentic Christianity follows the New Testament and doesn't burden itself with centuries of human traditions and innovations. Romans 12 verse 2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." The Lord's teaching is good and acceptable and perfect. Jesus alone has the words of eternal life.

To become a Christian, to be born again, you must believe in the Lord Jesus, you must repent of your sins and turn to righteousness, you must confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and you must be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Romans 6 and verses 3 to 7 says that in baptism you rise to walk in newness of life, freed from the enslavement of sin. Now God wants every person to know the truth and to be saved. And that includes you.

Now we hope our study, The Work of the Church, has caused you to want to serve God with all your heart. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). Now SEARCH is also on YouTube! We have our own channel "SearchTVMinistry". Watch them and like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say to every one of you, God bless you, and we want that for you, and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.