

Work That Matters

Hebrews 12:1-2

➤ Preface

The IRS calls the church a 501C non-profit organization. People point to the building and sign and say that is the church.

But the church is not the corporation.

The church is not the material building.

The church is not a denomination.

The church is not a club for your convenience.

The church is not “Plan B” in the mind of God.

The word church is used 140 times in the New Testament and every single time it **refers to the family; the children of God.** We are the church and we must realize the importance of the work we are called to do.

Scripture

¹Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV

Introduction

William Carey was a Cobbler (shoemaker) who became a pastor. While making shoes in his shop and reading the scripture, Carey heard the call: “If it be the duty of all men to believe the Gospel... then it be the duty of those who are entrusted with the Gospel to endeavor to make it known to all nations.” As Carey sobbed out, he responded; “Here am I; send me!”

When he met with a group of ministers to discuss his calling, the moderator gave him this response; “Young man, sit down; when God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine.”

William Carey remained faithful to God’s calling and became the first Baptist missionary.

That which God calls us to do, we must be faithful in doing.

Today I want to speak with you about the work of our church. To discuss our purpose as a church, you simply need to look at our church logo on your bulletin.

What is this great work to be accomplished?

1. We must be **growing** in God’s Word and understanding.

We must learn the teachings of Christ and obey them.

Christ says if we love Him we will obey Him.

How can we obey if we do not learn His teachings of the Word?

God’s word is where we find answers to life’s questions.

God’s word is where we find peace in a world of turmoil and pain.

God’s word is where we learn to make our marriages and other relationships rich.

God’s word is where we find wisdom to **view life from a divine perspective rather than human pessimism.**

God’s word is where we discover answers to marriage, business, leadership, dating, parenting, relationships, service and righteous living.

God’s word is where we nurture the faith that gives us great boldness as a church.

The church must offer biblical, informative and challenging Bible study for every age group.

We have doubled our Sunday School attendance in the last few years. We must continue to offer SS, Wednesday night bible study, Beth Moore studies, AWANA, Youth ministries, Sr. adult ministries and numerous other bible studies.

We must encourage our people to attend bible study. Together we must grow in our understanding and relationship with God.

2. We must practice loving one another.

Because of God's love, we must practice love. Yes, practice just as a physician practices medicine or an athlete practices a sport, we must practice love.

Our love must be put into action not just words. Christ says if we say we love Him but do not love our brothers, we are liars and we in fact do not love Him.

The natural response to our relationship with Him is to love others. The ordained response to grace is grace. The ordained response to forgiveness is forgiveness.

How do we love one another?

We start by not putting one another down. We refrain from smart comments and cute sayings that belittle people.

We replace them with words that lift up and encourage one another. We build up our fellow believers and encourage them.

Illus: I read an article this week about someone who built a round dome type house underground. It stays at a constant cool temperature year round. The owners said one thing unique about the house was that you better not talk about anyone because sound travels all through the house. You don't need a round home to keep your words appropriate, just obey God.

Some people drain our spiritual gas tanks while others fill them up. As a church, we should be lifting up one another. We know none of us are perfect. But we are called to love one another.

Loving one another means genuinely caring for one another, and ministering to one another, and finally sacrificing for one another.

Illus: Churches today are feuding over music. It is all about contemporary vs. traditional music. That fire does not rage in BBC because we love one another enough that we want everyone to worship. Churches that feud over music should realize that underneath the music issue is a lack of love for one another.

Love for one another becomes true love when we understand that **we are to put others above ourselves.**

3. We must be busy reaching the lost with the gospel.

Illus: Several years ago when our family joined a Baptist church, they had a fellowship after church. One lady said they were glad to have us and then turned to another lady and said aren't we glad to have the Tuckers. To which the lady responded, *"Yes but it is time to close the doors, we have enough."*

Too often that is some people's attitude. If this is your attitude, get on your knees and ask God to change your heart.

I do not believe anyone in BBC feels that way. God has given us a love for reaching out to others. Every aspect of our church ministry must be about reaching others.

There is no neutral gear for churches. If we are not sharing the gospel of Christ with others, we are moving backwards.

Illus: I read a story about a pastor who was called to a new church in a suburb of Houston, Texas. When he caught the bus from the suburb to downtown, the driver gave him a quarter more in change than he was due. As the pastor sat in his seat during the ride, he wrestled with returning the quarter. He knew the right thing to do was to return the money but he also reasoned that it was a small amount of money and the bus company would never notice the difference. When he was about to step off the bus, he handed the quarter to the driver and said, "You gave me too much change." The bus driver smiled and replied, "Aren't you the new preacher in town?" "Yes" he replied. "Well, I have been thinking a lot lately that I need to go to church and I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I'll be in your church on Sunday" When the preacher got off the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole and said, "Oh God, I almost sold your son for a quarter."

Everything about our lives must be oriented to reaching people with the gospel of Christ.

It is not just the responsibility of the pastor to share the gospel. **It is the work of the church.** It is the responsibility of every believer.

Like a Jubilee - We must share the good news of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ.

People need the Lord.

So, what are some practical ways we can go about our mission?

1. We must put aside those things that entangle and divide us.

Every Christian knows the truth, “I am a sinner!” And, “I do not deserve God’s forgiveness but His grace gives me forgiveness!”

Therefore, we must forgive others. There is no room in God’s work for harbored anger, resentment or refused forgiveness. Not one of us has the right to withhold forgiveness.

We must have complete unity within the fellowship.

Ill: Pam and I trying to canoe together.

2. Only by remaining steadfast will we see God’s purposes accomplished in our church.

Paul uses the analogy of a runner in a race to encourage us to stay the course.

Like a runner, we must be mindful of the prize and keep persisting in God’s work.

Illus: Jason’s SS class, only 1 in class a few years ago.

We already know the outcome. The battle will be won and the church will be triumphant.

We must see to it that we are among the faithful.

3. We must have faith in God for the opportunities, resources and results.

In the words of William Carey; *“Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.”*

We must expect and attempt great things. As our church we are not limited to man’s visions or man’s resources.

We no longer say, “well, we are just little ole Barnwell or we are just a little country church”

We are the family of God with the Master’s business as our responsibility and the Master’s resources at our disposal.

Ill: Child’s prayer: *“Dear God. I didn’t think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset you made Tuesday. That was really cool.”* Thomas

4. Our eyes must remain fixed on Jesus.

But I am afraid of failure. What if this or that goes wrong?

Our savior is powerful enough to see us through the challenges and struggles if we just keep our eyes on Him.

Conclusion

Ill: In Texas they have a saying about a man who is superficial, *“He is all hat and no cattle”*

At BBC, we will not be superficial, fancy on the outside but empty on the inside

We want to be the genuine article of exactly what God wants us to be.

May we be found faithful in Growing, Loving & Reaching.