

# The Church

A church that is merely comfortable, that never evangelizes, never encourages its people to stand on the front line, will never be strong, never be grateful, never be able to sort out profoundly Christian priorities.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 78

Jesus to the pious legalists of His day, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:4). Those who know the Word of God can use it, not to liberate a people, but to oppress. We may be able to point out with great exegetical accuracy the wicked things men are doing because we know the Bible, the divine law. But, if we do it to humiliate people, to bring them down as we exalt our superior knowledge, then we have shut the door to God’s grace. To proclaim the word of God to a people is to be willing to identify with those people, i.e., to move our fingers toward them, to enable them to receive God’s grace to fulfill it. We must never simply drop the Word of God on a people like a bomb; we must be willing to stand alongside a people, to walk with them, as we help them live it out. This is the characteristic mark of pastoral ministry pleasing to God.

James Nickel

... to be married to the spirit of the age is to make one a widow in the next ... [this marriage] is retrogressive and static because its alliance with a particular historically conditioned fad tethers it to a way of thinking that cannot survive a particular historical age.

P. Andrew Sandlin, *Totalism: God’s Sovereign Claims in All of Life*, p. 31

The methodology of modern church growth pundits is driven by the belief that theology and dogma must in some way conform to the temper of the times. The methodology of Biblical church growth, in contrast, is driven by the belief that theology and dogma transform the temper of the times.

James Nickel

The great error of our day is to equate the church with the kingdom of God. This creates churchianity, not biblical Christianity. We are commanded to seek first God’s kingdom, not church functions. The church is a very important aspect of the kingdom of God, but we live and move and have our being in God, not in the so-called “activities” of the church (some of which are highly questionable). The function of the church is to be a place of corporate worship, corporate prayer, and corporate training in the tools of dominion in terms of Christ’s great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The function of the church is to train, commission, and thrust out worshipping men and women who evangelize and disciple nations by taking dominion over all the earth in terms of their distinctive callings under God.

James Nickel

God has designed His Church to be the expression of the reign of Jesus on this earth; in a sense, the church is God’s government on earth undergirding visible governments. It can make possible a climate of benevolent law and order, the rule of justice and peace, and can hold in restraint the wild forces of tyranny, anarchy, and murder ... When the Church is faithful to her calling she becomes a healing agency in society, able to lift a whole nation or an empire to a higher plateau of wholesome living ... This is what it means to reign with Christ now.

Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life*

The first aim of the Church is to live to the praise and glory of God ... to declare in word, and demonstrate in attitude and deed the character of Jesus Christ who dwells within His people in a dynamic and effectual union ... to declare the reality of a life changing encounter with a living Christ ... to demonstrate that change by an unselfish, love-filled life.

Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life*

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While that great body [the Roman Empire] was invaded by open violence or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigor from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol.

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I (New York: The Modern Library), p. 382

Most ... tend to worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

God is spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. Only the Holy Spirit can enable a fallen man to worship God acceptably. As far as that's concerned, only the Holy Spirit can pray acceptably; only the Holy Spirit can do anything acceptably.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

The work done by a worshipper will have eternity in it.

A. W. Tozer, *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

The paradox of faith is that the church on fire is the church at rest.

Sherwood Elliot Wirt

Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again.

Matthew Henry (commentary on Isaiah 61:1)

The church in the Western world has been taken captive by the world it helped create.

Os Guinness

Sleepwalking Christians are the heart of the crisis in Western Civilization today.

Gary North

At least five times, the Faith has to all appearances gone to the dogs. In each of these five cases, it was the dog that died.

G. K. Chesterton

The key question for every local church is not, "What is God's plan for this church?" but, "What is God's plan for the world and how is this church going to fit into that plan?"

James Nickel