God's Team Is Called Church (Abridged)

By Berry Kercheville



The Lord created the local church to accomplish the work of glorifying His name in the world. Yet many Christians are losing sight of this purpose, and local churches often fail to live up to their identity. At the root of this failure is not seeing the church as a team with a mission.

"Church" is something people "go to," "join," or "connect with." Yet "team" is rarely used to describe it. Paul, however, repeatedly describes the church as a body. In Ephesians 4:16, he writes that the whole body, joined together, grows when "every part does its share." Peter likewise says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another," so that "in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

The picture of a team teaches several critical principles. A team is weakened when members refuse to do their share. One member who is out of step can discourage the group; grumbling quickly demoralizes a team. Each member must identify his role and develop his abilities. A few hardworking members cannot continually carry everyone else without suffering burnout and discouragement.

Team members, especially leaders, are most effective when they concentrate on their God-given roles. The apostles understood this. When an important need arose in Jerusalem, they told the church, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables," adding, "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2, 4).



This principle is frequently violated. Shepherds often do work that deacons and other members could perform, while their responsibility of caring for souls suffers. Preachers can likewise spend too much time on tasks others could accomplish, leaving too little time for prayer, study, teaching, and evangelism. Meanwhile, spiritually mature members sometimes worsen the problem by expecting leaders to respond to every need.

Paul says evangelists, pastors, and teachers are given "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11-12, NIV). Leaders do not perform all the service; they equip the church so that "every part does its share" (Eph. 4:16).

A church team must also understand its mission. God has given us three goals: love God passionately (Matt. 22:37), love one another fervently (1 Pet. 1:22), and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:39). Activities that do not serve God's revealed purposes should never displace the spiritual work He assigned His church.

The church must deepen every member's knowledge of God, growing toward "the knowledge of the Son of God" and spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:13). Greater knowledge strengthens believers against Satan and enables their light to shine before others (Matt. 5:16).

Team members must hold themselves accountable to Christ's demanding call. Jesus warned that discipleship requires placing Him above family, self, possessions, and even life itself (Luke 14:26-35). Anything less becomes salt that has lost its taste.



Finally, the church must want to win. We are not merely gathered to "play the game." We are engaged in a spiritual battle for souls against the powers of darkness. God's purpose is that His wisdom be displayed through the church (Eph. 3:10-11). Christ places within His people "rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38), and He calls us to shine as lights before the world (Matt. 5:16).

Through Christ, we are Abraham's offspring (Gal. 3:29), continuing the promise that through Abraham's seed "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 22:18). God has not called His church merely to attend, observe, or belong. He assembled a team with a mission. Every member has a role. Every part must do its share. And together, **by God's grace, we labor to glorify His name and bring His blessing to the world.**