

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Our Outreach Program

(Jerry Fite)

When people think of churches' outreach programs, they envision soup kitchens, food pantries, staffed counselors, K-12 schools and children's day care centers. People take pride in their church reaching out through these programs and endeavoring to make a difference in this cruel and evil world.

However, when we examine the New Testament, we do not see churches funding these separate programs, even as the churches were infallibly guided by Jesus through His apostles. The offerings collected in the churches were used to support preachers who preached the saving gospel of Christ (*Philippians 4:15-16*, *2 Corinthians 11:8*), and were used to help poor and needy Christians (*Acts 2:44-45*, *4:34-35*, *1 Corinthians 16:1-3*, etc.). But did such a God authorized focus allow the church to make a difference in the world and local communities?

The New Testament church's "outreach program" involves EVERY MEMBER. While each member gives as he or she prospers on the first day of the week to help needy Christians,

these same individuals are personally involved in helping the needy around them who are not Christians. The Christian reaches out with such help, for he or she knows that as one has "opportunity" the Christian is to "do good unto all men" (*Galatians 6:10*). The helping hand of the Christian is reaching out to help widows and orphans in their need, because true believers know that such reaching out is as essential to keeping oneself unspotted from the world in a pure and undefiled religion (*James 1:27*).

Every Christian is to be involved in showing hospitality to strangers (*Hebrews 13:2*, *1 Timothy 5:10*, *1 Peter 4:9*). Being kind and helpful to those whom we first meet has a powerful effect for good. In the Lord's church there is no need for a group of "official greeters," for every member is to make sure every visitor feels welcomed. No visitor should visit our congregation and not be warmly spoken to. No visitor should ever experience a "miffed" look when they sit on the pew where we usually sit. All Christians are to take an interest in showing love and hospitality to strangers in our midst.

Every member is to be "holding forth the word of life" (*Philippians 4:16*). Unashamedly extending forth the Gospel to the lost world, while at the same time manifesting the example of a pure and godly life, Christians are "as lights in the world." Every true disciple becomes an effective outreach of light and salt to a world in desperate need of guidance and a conduit through which the God of heaven "is glorified" (*Matthew 5:14-16*).

Man-designed "outreach programs" often cry out for volunteers to run them. Church leaders are constantly trying to find ways to get individuals involved. The Lord's "outreach program" accomplishes God's designed work, while involving every member at the same time. At the Judgment, it will not matter how many varieties of "outreach programs" your church sponsored, but whether YOU were personally involved in the Lord's authorized "outreach program." Did YOU assist the widows in your own family in their time of need (*1 Timothy 5:16*)? Did YOU help all men, including orphans and widows as you had the opportunity? Did YOU engage in hospitality to strangers? Were YOU faithful to teach others the gospel (*2 Timothy 2:2*)?