

## ***Rediscovering Our True Purpose***

George Colbert conducted a survey of religious individuals who were all active in their local congregations. He asked them what they thought the church's #1 purpose was. The response was that 80% thought the church's primary responsibility was to take care of the members' needs. In other words, four out of five felt that the church existed to take care of itself.

Certainly, the local church should provide for the physical needs (food, clothing, and shelter) of members who are struggling. Likewise, emotional needs are met in hospital visitation and grief counseling. Worship facilities, Bible classes, fellowship activities, and youth projects help lead members toward spiritual maturity.

Like individuals, churches have to resist the temptation of selfishness. Personal comforts and needs must not blind us to the greater needs of those outside of our fellowship. Paul challenges all of us with the message of Galatians 2:20, "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.*"

After restoring Zaccheus, Jesus said, "*...for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost*" (Luke 19:10). If Jesus was interested in the lost, should we not be as well? If Jesus' primary message was evangelistic, how can we make outreach a secondary project? The local church needs to be evangelistic and mission minded. The lost need to weigh so heavily on our hearts that we share our energies and resources to seek them.

Colbert's statistics explain why most churches are not growing and why mission efforts are sagging. If our personal comforts and fellowship needs are our primary focus, we simply become a social club with a religious theme. If helping the "needy" is the final goal of our efforts, we settle for being a service organization with a religious vocabulary. However, it is the spiritual reality of evangelism that sets the church off as a unique entity—one that is rescuing the lost and addressing the realities of eternity.

—Don Loftis