



Five ways to help a church die

1–Neglect it

Helping a church die is easy. What do you have to do? The same as to help a child die—God forbid. You stop loving. You stop feeding. You stop protecting. The child dies by neglect. Your church is meant to be the thriving, energetic, battle-fighting body of Christ. But if you stop nurturing it, protecting it, exercising it and building it up, it will die by neglect. Neglect is a slow process, and dangerous. A church can die by neglect over decades, and few know it until the final members disconnect power and padlock doors. That’s disheartening! So here’s the solution that brings back the life. “Christ’s love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness.” Ephesians 5:26-27 (MSG).

2–Internalize it

A child who grows up completely self-focused is destined for isolation, dysfunction and despair. Self-focus can also destroy a church. Is your church focused on its own wants, or on the needs around it? Does it spend most of its time on internal operation, or on external calling? Is it consumed with management, or with mission? Allocation of time and budget is the evidence. Endless committees and engrossed policy-making point to spiritual disease. There is a cure and a strategy—straight from the early church. Free up leaders to focus on two things—ministry of the Word and ministry of prayer. And provide spiritual leadership for members to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so they can pursue ministries for people in need. Acts 6:2–4. Gotta love a plan like this!

3–Complicate it

If you give a dollar to government to help people in need, 30 cents of it will help people in need. 70 cents is consumed in costs. If you give a dollar to a private charity, 82 cents of it will help people in need. Only 18 cents is consumed in costs. Sole bureaucracy versus small-unit dispersion. Complex versus streamlined. Complicated versus simple. At its origin, Christianity was small-unit, streamlined, simple. Over history, it grew like a government. Now Christian faith can get back to its roots. Your local church is a jewel! It will thrive if it’s as Christ intended it to be. “Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. You are the equipment.... Keep it simple.’ Then they were on the road ... right and left they sent the demons packing.” Mark 6:8-13 (MSG).

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4–Anaesthetise it

Many churches are asleep (Revelation 3:1–3). The last thing these congregations need is to be taken a step further—to be anaesthetised. Uninspiring, drowsy preaching can kill churches that are already lethargic. What’s needed is a wake-up call. Gospel enthusiasm. Energetic teaching. Calls to confession. Isaiah and the prophets old and new did this, and paid a price for it. Some of the people said, “Tell us what makes us feel better.... Quit hounding us with The Holy of Israel.” Isaiah 30:10-11 (MSG). But the prophets refused. They confronted and appealed. The day for fervent preaching has not passed. Solid Bible teaching is still effective for church growth—deep down, people need it and receive it, *as long as it’s set in the grace of God and the provision of Christ*. Preachers: Bring it on—wake us up in Christ!

5–Demoralize it

Want to give a straight testimony? “This is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” 1 John 5:11-12 (NRSV). Life in Christ!—the everlasting Gospel. Life for believers, life for churches. Let’s be on guard against stern judges who coerce holiness devoid of Christ. The Bible calls them “savage wolves.” They criticise leaders, demoralise new believers, produce division, and distort the grace of God. Acts 20:28–32. They can kill a church in less than a year. Here’s the contrast and the truth: “Thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him.” 2 Corinthians 2:14 (NRSV).