

It is hard

When we started our church in 1982, my wife and I set up the chairs for the first service. While knocking on doors, God gave me a couple who wanted to be a help; they were certainly a blessing and were happy to pick up various small tasks. My wife and I brought cribs and baby supplies for the nursery, and for those first five or six weeks, we did all the setup, clean up, and take down of everything that was involved. Slowly, we started recruiting people to help us, and it did not take long before other workers helped us. The fact is, we kept being involved. As the months turned into years, on Sunday morning, people were setting up chairs, tables, portable toilets, driving or towing busses (that we used for classrooms) — all of the setup was done by us and our people, which was simply a lot of work. A horse trough needed to be brought, filled with water, heated, and then, at the end of the day, drained and returned to its home.

I could not explain the great deal of work it took to keep a tent functional for over nine years.

Nine teenage girls attended our first youth activity (which took place only a few weeks after starting our church). We had an eighth-grade girl and a twelfth-grade girl in our teen department; we asked them each to bring their friends. My wife had a simple “make homemade cookies and sit around and talk” activity: nine teenage girls came and all seven visitors trusted Christ. From that day until this, we have held teen activities several times a month. At first, I ran the activities, but it was not long before I started recruiting some help to make the activities flow more smoothly. For the next fifteen years, I ran every camp, organized activities, and helped make everything happen. Again, I did have people show up, to help and work; we constantly worked to develop those who would one day be in leadership. My wife and I kept working, and others followed our example — it was a lot of work.

My wife and I ran the first few camps completely, but it was not long before we had people helping us. We ran children’s camps, Vacation Bible School, and had fundraisers to help kids attend these activities. We are entering our thirty-sixth year of ministry, and I am still going to camps, preaching to the young people, and helping out with various activities — including the annual senior class trip. It is a lot of work!

Saturday soul winning and teen soul winning were started early in the ministry, and I organized most of it. I drove the van from public school to public school picking up our teenagers to take them soul winning on Wednesday afternoons. After soul winning and dinner, we headed back to church, and I would give some kind of devotion to teach them something about the Christian life. Shortly thereafter, I began teaching the Wednesday night Bible study. The day was long and extremely busy — it was a lot of work!

When we have a special soul-winning program, I feel I should be there. I also feel that the pastor should be faithful to the regular soul winning times, whether it be Thursday or Saturday, as well as, keep up on follow-up of visitors, hospital visitation, and visiting the sick and shut-ins. All of these jobs need to be done — it is a lot of work.

When we have a work day to maintain the property or building, it only seems logical that the pastor be there. After thirty-five years, my wife and I are still a part of every workday — it is a lot of work.

I feel too many preachers want to be pulpiteers; they want to be on display and be the one everyone hears, but they really do not want to work that hard. If you would like a church based on entertainment, you can do that; but even music will be a lot of work. If you would like a church based on Easter and Christmas cantatas, or on your brilliant ability to exegete the Scriptures, you are welcome to go that route as well, but it will still be a lot of work.

No matter what a successful church is doing, success takes a great deal of work. I chose to go soul winning and train converts, disciple Christians and strengthen the weak — it is a lot of work. The ministry is not a two-day-a-week job with sports and recreation in the middle — it is a lot of work.