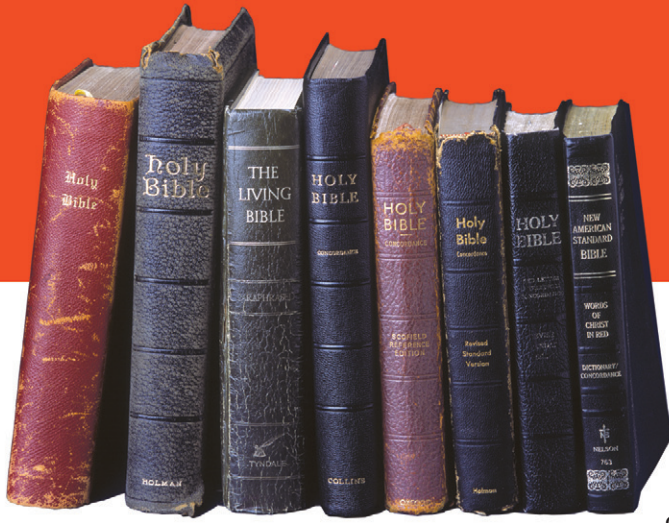


BAPTISTS and MINISTRY

“O, Christian, instead of disputing, let me tell thee how to prove your religion. Live it out! Live it out!”

Charles Hadden Spurgeon
Baptist pastor, London,
England, 1800s



“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Matthew 25:40

need, believer priests are to exercise their soul competency to find and

regionally, nationally and throughout the world.

Methods of Ministry

Baptist ministry is delivered by an extensive array of methods. These methods are utilized by individuals, churches, institutions and denominational organizations such as associations and conventions.

In keeping with the example and commands of Jesus, **individual Baptists** minister to human need. On their own, apart from any organization, Baptists bind the wounds of the brokenhearted, visit the sick and dying, encourage the depressed and conduct myriad other ministries. Furthermore, dedicated individuals make up the corps of volunteers and staff members who enable churches and other organizations to minister to people.

Baptist churches of various sizes and locations minister to human need. In addition to meeting spiritual needs through evangelism and Christian nurture, churches meet other aspects of human hurt — physical, mental, emotional and social. Counseling for the distressed, food for the hungry, clothes for the poor, transportation for the disabled ... the list of ministries is practically endless.

Baptist institutions minister to human need. Baptists founded schools and colleges to provide for the educational needs of people before public schools and tax-supported colleges existed. Institutions to care for orphaned and otherwise needy children are among the oldest Baptist institutions. Baptists support institutions to care for the elderly. Baptist hospitals and clinics minister through extensive chaplaincy and charity programs. Many institutions send staff members and volunteers to various parts of the world for ministry.

Baptist organizations of different kinds meet the needs of people in numerous ways. Some of these act in times of natural disasters, such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes, to care for those adversely affected. The organizations supply food, water and clothes and help to rebuild homes and churches. Others provide ongoing programs such as job training for the unemployed and literacy training for those who cannot read. Some of these organizations function on their own, while others work in collaboration with various religious and secular groups.

Baptist conventions and associations of churches foster many of these institutions and organizations, channel funds to them given by individuals and churches, and help to coordinate ministry efforts.

Conclusion

Ministry in numerous forms plays a major role in Baptist life. Instructed by the Bible and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Baptists endeavor to minister in Jesus' name to the total person, to all people and in all places to the glory of God the Father.

For further information on Baptists and ministry, see www.baptistdistinctives.org.

One of the ways that Baptists strive to live out their faith is by ministering to the total needs of people. In multiple ways throughout the world, Baptists ease human hurt in the name of Jesus.

Bases for Ministry

Baptist ministry to people is rooted in basic Baptist beliefs and polity. Such ministry is not tacked on but is an integral part of who Baptists are. The reasons for, the extent of and the nature of ministry all relate to bedrock Baptist convictions.

Baptists stress the importance of the **lordship of Jesus Christ**. The Lord Jesus calls for his disciples to minister to others.

Jesus set an example in his ministry of caring for all people and for their total needs. Out of his concern for the physical needs of people, he made blind eyes see, still tongues speak, crippled legs walk and sick people well (Matthew 11:5). He bestowed mental and emotional health on deranged people. He provided self-respect and acceptance to social outcasts such as a crooked tax collector and an adulterous woman.

Furthermore, Jesus as Lord taught the importance of ministry. He declared to his disciples, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). When asked what the great commandment of the Law was, he answered that it was twofold: love for God and love for neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Love for neighbor, Jesus indicated, is lived out in acts of mercy meeting need. He declared that a basis for eternal judgment of life is how well each person has have met the needs of others (Matthew 25:31-46).

Baptists are committed to **the authority of the Bible** for faith and practice. The Bible makes clear the importance of ministry to total human need. The Bible teaches that we are to love not just with words but with deeds of compassion (1 John 3:17-18). The New Testament records how the earliest churches did just that.

Baptists believe **salvation comes only by a faith response to the grace gift of God in Jesus Christ**. We are not saved by good works but by faith. However, salvation is to result in good works: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). “Faith without works is dead,” the Bible teaches (James 2:20).

Individuals who are saved by faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior become **believer priests** (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6). Each believer priest has a responsibility to minister to others. Ministry is not a task just for pastors and deacons but for all believer priests. Faced with a bewildering array of human

follow God's will regarding which needs to meet. In this, they rely on the empowering (Acts 1:8) and leadership of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Baptists practice **congregational church governance, local church autonomy and voluntary cooperation**. The Baptist denomination does not — cannot — dictate to churches which ministries to perform or how to relate to each other in ministry. Churches carry out a wide assortment of ministries. They also work together in voluntary cooperation to provide ministries beyond the local congregation through the work of associations, conventions, societies and unions.

A strong commitment to **religious freedom** has led Baptists to carry out ministry apart from coercion. Individuals and churches are free to choose which ministries to conduct. The ministries are provided by freewill offerings of Baptists (2 Corinthians 8:1-8), not by funds collected by either taxation or denominational assessment, both of which would involve coercion. **Baptist ministry is rooted in voluntary participation, support and cooperation.**

Extent of Ministry

The extent of Baptist ministry is based on the example and teachings of Jesus and the instructions of the Bible. Therefore, ministry is for the total person, for all people and in all places.

The **total person** is the concern of Baptist ministry—spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social. **Physical needs** are met through such ministries as providing food, clothing, water, shelter and medical care. **Mental and emotional needs** are met by such things as counseling, visiting those who are confined and positive preaching and teaching. **Social needs** are met by fellowship, recreation and inclusion of the lonely and social outcasts in these and other activities. **Spiritual needs** are addressed by evangelism, missions, discipleship and Christian education. Baptists generally view meeting needs as incomplete unless a spiritual component is included, such as is provided by evangelism and Christian nurture.

Baptists also minister to **all people**—individuals of all ages; all spiritual, physical, emotional and mental conditions; all races, cultures, classes, philosophies and creeds; and all economic, educational and social levels.

Baptist ministry can be found in a **wide variety of places**. Inner city slums, prisons, military camps, hospitals, rural areas, refugee centers, disaster sites ... on and on the list goes of places where Baptists minister. Baptist ministries can be found locally,