CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION

Introduction:
1. We mean by "a successful congregation", one that is successful in carrying out the Lord's mission for the church.
2. We mean by "strong" -- strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10); strong spiritually.
3. We mean by "characteristics" -- the characteristics that are taught in the New Testament that a congregation must have to be successful in the Lord's work.
4. Churches of Christ were successful in the first century, and churches of Christ can be successful today if they will follow the New Testament pattern.

I. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION MUST HAVE A CONVERTED MEMBERSHIP

1. Many in the church today have "inherited religion".
2. Many give their reason for being a member of the church: "I was brought up in the church of Christ"; "My family were members of the church"; "When I reached the age of 12 or 13 I was baptized."
3. Many third and fourth generation members of the church have no real understanding of the church. Many are not dedicated to Christ and His word.
4. Sinners need to come into the church with the attitude -- "I know I am lost and undone, and if I don't obey the Lord then I am bound for hell"...
   (1) Matt. 18: 2 - 3
   (2) John 3: 3-5
   (3) II Cor. 5:17
5. Many people are aligned with the church:
   (1) Because the family are members, and they want to be with family.
   (2) Some to please a companion
   (3) Others to be with their best friends
   (4) These people have not obeyed the gospel, they are not converted to Christ.
6. A congregation can only be successful when the membership is converted.

II. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION MUST HAVE A FAITHFUL MEMBERSHIP IN ATTENDANCE

1. Converted people will be faithful in attendance.
2. They will seek first the kingdom of God -- Matt. 6: 33
3. They will put Christ before entertainment -- II Tim. 3: 4
4. They will put Christ before family -- Matt. 10:37
5. They will put Christ before making money -- Matt. 13:22

III. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION IS SOUND IN DOCTRINE

1. "Doctrine" simply means teaching.
2. It must teach "sound doctrine" -- Tit. 2:1
3. It must abide in the doctrine of Christ -- II John 9
4. It must, with sound doctrine, exhort and convince the gainsayers -- Tit. 1:9
5. It must not be carried about with divers and strange doctrines -- Heb. 13:9; Eph. 4:14

IV. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION MUST BE UNITED

1. The Jerusalem church was -- Acts 2:46; Acts 4:32
2. Paul pled with the Corinthians to be united -- I Cor. 1:10
3. Jesus prayed for unity -- John 17:20 - 21
4. Paul to the Ephesians -- Eph. 4:1 - 3

V. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION HAS A STEADFAST, WORKING MEMBERSHIP

1. Steadfast in the Apostle's teaching -- Acts 2:42
2. Steadfast in carrying out the mission of the church -- I Cor. 15:58

VI. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION HAS A MEMBERSHIP PURE IN LIFE

1. Tit. 2:11 -12
2. II Tim. 2:22; I Cor. 6:18
3. Rom. 12:1 - 2; I Thess. 5:22

VII. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION HAS A MEMBERSHIP LIBERAL IN GIVING

1. II Cor. 8:2 -5; II Cor. 9:6 - 7
2. I Cor. 16:1 - 2; Rom. 12:8

VIII. A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATION IS MILITANT

1. It must be militant in its stand against error and wickedness -- Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 6:12
2. It must be militant in its defense of the gospel -- Jude 3; Phil. 1:17
3. It must be militant in preaching the gospel -- Matt. 28:19 - 20; Mk. 16:15 - 16

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us all work hard to make this a successful congregation in the Lord's work, and for our own salvation.
2. Are you here and out of Christ? Won't you obey the gospel today?

Donald Townsley  (Hebron Lane, KY  July 31: 1988)