

HOW TO DESTROY A SOUND CONGREGATION

Sermon by Donald Townsley

INTRODUCTION

1. You may wonder why I would use such a subject.
2. I am using this approach hoping to HELP any who might be guilty to realize what they are doing to weaken the congregation, and what they are doing to their own soul -- I Cor. 3:17.
3. I am using this approach to help ALL to identify the kind of members that destroy strong, sound congregations by their actions.
4. The FORMULA for destroying the effectiveness of a strong congregation is simple and easy.
5. There are many things about a SOUND, STRONG CONGREGATION that distinguishes it from OTHER CONGREGATIONS, and these are the VITAL POINTS to attack first in destroying a sound church.
6. The devil knows the points to attack first in destroying a congregation.
7. He (the devil) will plant in the hearts of as many members as possible the WILL to do HIS WORK OF DESTRUCTION -- I Pet. 5:8; 2 Cor. 2:11.
8. Let us examine the approach and points of attack members use doing the work of the devil to destroy a congregation.

I. EVERY STRONG CONGREGATION HAS A GOOD AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING PROGRAM.

1. A good teaching program to teach the TRUTH is one of the greatest assets of a congregation -- John 8:32.
2. To CONTRIBUTE to the DOWNFALL of the teaching arrangement of a congregation will RESULT in the destruction of a strong church.
3. There are a NUMBER OF WAYS to accomplish this destruction:
 - (1) Don't attend faithfully and regularly -- attend only OCCASIONALLY -- this will DEMORALIZE the teacher, DISCOURAGE the class, and it WILL KEEP YOU FROM LEARNING the Word of God.
 - (2) Never prepare your lesson or participate during the class period.
 - (3) MURMUR and COMPLAIN about the SUBJECT MATTER and the TEACHER all the time.
 - (4) Be HABITUALLY LATE for class.
 1. This minimizes the value of Bible study for all concerned.
 2. Your being late will handicap those who are prompt.
 3. Your being late will disturb the order of the class.

II. THE SECOND STEP IN DESTROYING A STRONG CHURCH IS TO DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF APATHY AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THE SAME.

1. Be as indifferent as possible toward all that is being done, and turn a deaf ear to any plea to get you more involved in the work.
2. Feel no responsibility to help in the work:
 - (1) To help in the Worship.
 - (2) To help in the Teaching.
 - (3) To help with the Personal Work.
 - (4) To help with the cleaning of the building, the cutting of the grass, and the taking care of the Lord's Supper.

3. Find as many FAULTS with the Elders, Deacons, Teachers, and Saints as you can think up, and then think about them during Worship.
4. Never bring your Bible to Worship.
5. Never listen to a lesson with self in view; never make personal application to your own life.
6. INDIFFERENCE on the part of a large number will completely demoralize and destroy the work of a STRONG CONGREGATION.

III. ANOTHER POINT OF ATTACK IN DESTROYING A SOUND CHURCH IS TO INTRODUCE CORRUPTIVE DOCTRINES.

1. The apostles preached the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, or the doctrine of Christ WITHOUT COMPROMISE to all the world -- Mk. 16: 15 - 16; Acts 20: 26 - 27; 2 John 9 - 11.
2. The man who teaches anything except the gospel of Christ is accursed in the sight of God --Gal. 1: 6 - 9.
3. First century churches were attacked with CORRUPTIVE DOCTRINES:
 - (1) The church at Pergamos had those that held "*the doctrine of Balaam*" and the "*doctrine of the Nicolaitans*" --Rev. 2: 14 - 15.
 - (2) Paul warned about the "*doctrines of man*" -- Col. 2:22.
 - (3) Jesus condemned the "*doctrines of men*" -- Matt. 15:9
 - (4) The Hebrew writer warned "*be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines*" -- Heb. 13:9.
4. We must never teach our OPINIONS and press them as matters of faith.
 - (1) We must learn to distinguish between Faith and Opinion.
 - (2) In the realm of opinion, GOD HAS NOT SPOKEN.
 - (3) In the realm of faith, GOD HAS SPOKEN -- Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6; 2 Cor. 5:7.
 - (4) We must never press an opinion beyond what it is -- simply an opinion.
 1. When someone begins to press his opinion without realizing that he is doing so, he must be warned he is only pressing an opinion, and an opinion is not faith.
 2. Matters of opinion, judgment, private conviction, or personal preference cannot be allowed to disturb the peace of God's people.
 3. One must extend to others the same liberty which he exercises in such matters -- Rom. 14: 3 - 6; 14: 10 - 14.
 4. When we will not grant the same right to others we want for ourselves, it becomes impossible for us to work peacefully and united with others.
5. When opinionated doctrines are brought into a congregation, a campaign is started to spread the doctrines, and brother is set against brother, family against family, until the church is divided.

IV. THE FOURTH STEP IN ACCOMPLISHING THE DESTRUCTION OF A STRONG, SOUND CHURCH IS FOR A LARGE NUMBER OF THE MEMBERS TO LOVE THE WORLD AND TURN BACK TO THOSE THINGS FROM WHICH THEY WERE DELIVERED WHEN THEY OBEYED THE GOSPEL.

1. Peter talked about some who turned back -- 2 Pet. 2: 18 - 20.
2. Peter said some had "*forgotten that they were purged from their old sins*"-- 2 Pet. 1:9
3. Demas turned back to the world -- 2 Tim. 4:10.
4. The brother at Corinth turned back -- I Cor. 5: 1 - 5.
5. John warns us about loving the world -- I John 2: 15 - 16.
6. James tells that loving the world will make us enemies of God -- James 4:4.

7. Paul said those that mind the things of the flesh will die -- Rom. 8: 5 - 6.
(1) The works of the Flesh are listed in Gal. 5: 19 - 21.
8. When members practice immorality and it is TOLERATED and even EXCUSED by members who do not practice it, but will not purge it out, this ungodliness soon destroys all the influence the congregation has -- I Cor. 5: 1 - 7.
9. Such a congregation will lose its relationship to the Lord, and the Candlestick will be removed out of its place.

CONCLUSION

1. I have given you the sickening picture of the downfall of a good congregation and how to accomplish it.
2. This is a CYCLE in the history of many congregations.
3. The PURPOSE of this lesson is to impress upon everyone the need to avoid any part of this course that would lead to the destruction of this church.
4. It is so easy to allow ourselves to drift from the truth.
5. The changes are slow and gradual.
6. The consequences are the same.