
PROBLEMS

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST FACE AND SOLVE
TO ASSURE STRONG, GROWING CONGREGATIONS
FOR THE NEXT GENERATION



BY DONALD TOWNSLEY

PROBLEMS

*God's People Must Face And Solve To Assure Strong, Growing Congregations
For The Next Generation*

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LESSON ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. I want to say in the beginning of this lesson that I do not believe the Lord's church is going to be destroyed from the face of the earth, or even from American soil.
2. I believe God cannot lie -- Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2.
 - (1) He said through Daniel that He would set up a kingdom "*which shall never be destroyed*" -- Dan. 2:44.
 - (2) Dan. 7: 13 - 14
 - (3) Heb. 12:28
 - (4) It cannot be destroyed because we have an indestructible Word -- Luke 8: 11; I Pet. 1: 23 -25
3. While I believe the church can "*never be destroyed*", I do believe congregations may die or lose their identity.
 - (1) The church at Ephesus -- Rev. 2: 5
 - (2) The church at Sardis -- Rev. 3:1 - 6
 - (3) The churches that Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy established and labored with have long been extinct.
 - (4) Local churches in a given region of the world may suffer from the SAME AFFLICTIONS -- all may go into apostasy and lose their identity as the Lord's people, or become totally extinct.
 - (5) I do believe churches of Christ in the USA do face a survival problem because we have some common problems that must be realized and cured, or they will bring death to many congregations and will decrease membership in others.
 - (6) Today is not like the 40's, the 50's, the 60's, or the 70's in churches of Christ.
 - (7) We FACE A GROWTH PROBLEM that MUST BE FACED HEAD ON!
 - (8) The problems we face will not go away by sticking our heads in the sand and taking a "business as usual" approach.
 - (9) THERE IS NOTHING AT ALL PESSIMISTIC ABOUT FACING THE FACTS.
 - (10) There are many facts that churches of Christ must BEGIN to face if we are to continue to grow and leave strong congregations preaching the truth to the next generation.
 - (11) IF WE WILL FACE THESE FACTS GOD WILL HELP US AND GIVE THE INCREASE -- I Cor. 3:6; Isa. 55:11.
 - (12) Church growth begins with each individual Christian and local church facing the facts and placing full trust in the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16), and doing what must be done to carry the gospel to the lost -- I Cor. 15: 1 - 2; I Cor. 1:21.
 1. The disciples in Jerusalem -- Acts 8:4; 5:42; 20:20.
 2. The Jerusalem church -- Acts 11:22.
 - (13) Churches of Christ saw a tremendous growth from 1945 to 1965.
 - (14) Bro. Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr. of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who has been doing survey research since 1970 in churches of Christ throughout the United States says:
 1. "Our rate of growth started to decline soon after 1965."
 2. "Our rate of growth has continued to decline every year since then."

3. "Early in 1980 we reached ZERO-LEVEL growth and started decreasing in total membership throughout the United States."
- (15) If the statistical projections of growth rate in the churches of Christ were correct, by the year 2010 churches of Christ will be NON-EXISTENT in America.
- (16) He says, "Around the turn of the century, it will be down to only half its present size (*pg. 1, Why Churches Grow*).
- (17) He says that today only 23 percent of congregations are experiencing any significant increase in membership; he says most of this is from transfer of membership rather than conversions.
- (18) 41 percent of congregations are just holding their own.
- (19) 36 percent of congregations are now experiencing a significant decrease in membership.
- (20) Most of the decline in growth rate in the past 15 years has come in the south and southwest.
- (21) California had 70,000 members in 1900 -- in 1980 there were 20,000 (Cline Paden).

I. LET US TAKE A HARD LOOK AT OURSELVES NOW -- 2 Cor. 13:5; I Cor. 1:26

1. We are LOSING GROUND as faithful saints GROW OLD AND PASS AWAY.
 - (1) Think how many we are going to lose in the next 10 + years in this area alone.
 - (2) Who will replace them as leaders and stable pillars in congregations.
 - (3) Most of our leadership in churches of Christ today in cities came from rural churches where they were converted and trained.
 - (4) The rural churches have died and are dying; the leaders have moved away long ago in many places.
 - (5) They are not any longer converting the young and feeding city churches with material for leadership.
 - (6) And city churches are not doing that well in converting and training new leaders.
2. We are losing ground as the WORLD ATTRACTS MANY "DEMAS" in our time -- 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - (1) Preachers have had affair after affair with women in the congregations where they preach -- I Tim. 5:2.
 - (2) Preachers have divorced their wives and married again.
 - (3) Elders have divorced their wives for another woman.
 - (4) Deacons have done the same.
 - (5) Song leaders and Bible class teachers also.
 - (6) Many members have been drawn back into the world by the same sins.
3. We are losing ground as the people we do baptize fall by the wayside before they can become productive in the Lord's kingdom.
 - (1) Matt. 13: 20 - 22; Luke 8: 13 - 14; Mk. 4: 18 - 19
4. We are losing ground when we are losing 63% of our young people.
 - (1) Some places are losing 75%.
 - (2) Some have lost the last three generations.
 - (3) This is caused by MATERIALISTIC homes.
 - (4) This is caused by division in Local congregations -- Brethren cannot get along.
5. Many don't want their sons to make preachers.
 - (1) Not many are like Hannah.
 - (2) Many want their sons to make money instead.
 - (3) Some say the brethren give preachers too much trouble -- "I don't want my sons to have to go through that" -- Think of the trouble God's Son had!
6. Many don't want their daughters to marry preachers.
 - (1) A preacher can't afford her much of a lifestyle from the material standpoint -- Lk. 12:15.
 - (2) The days of Amos -- Amos 3: 15; 4:1

7. We are becoming more and more a church made up of WOMEN.
 - (1) We are baptizing more women than men.
 - (2) The "Macho man" is not interested in the gospel.
 - (3) The "Macho" image:
 1. He drinks in the bars.
 2. He wears his shirt open to his belt buckle.
 3. He seduces all the women he can.
 4. His language is foul.
 5. His temper is hot.
 6. He "breaks heads".
 - (4) Who is going to be the role models for our young people when we don't have GODLY MEN?

II. LET US LOOK AT OUR BASIC PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH TODAY

1. Zero-growth
2. Fragmentation or division
 - (1) Division over non-doctrinal issues.
 - (2) Brethren don't love each other -- I John 4:20.
3. Materialism
 - (1) The seeking after things and "stuff".
 - (2) Better cars, better houses, better furniture.
4. The destruction of the Family.
5. Christians don't know Christ and God; they have no personal relationship with Them.
6. Members generally don't know what the Bible teaches -- Hos. 4:6.
7. We are without ZEAL -- 2 Cor. 9:2.
8. We are seeing everybody's problems but our own -- Rom. 2:1.
9. We destroy our good examples among us:
 - (1) Let a man or woman begin to set good examples in work and life and:
 1. Many become jealous and try to destroy them.

CONCLUSION

PROBLEMS

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LESSON TWO

The Problem of Zero-Growth

Introduction

1. Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr. said, "Early in 1980 we reached ZERO-LEVEL growth and started decreasing in total membership throughout the United States."
2. He said, "Only 23 percent of our congregations today are experiencing any significant increase in membership", and "most of that increase is coming from transfer of membership rather than conversions."
3. "Forty-one percent of our congregations are just holding their own".
4. "Thirty-six percent of our congregations have already started to experience a significant decrease in membership."
5. Many congregations are only baptizing the children of the members.
6. Much of the growth we see is from transfer of membership.
7. Many congregations are at ZERO-LEVEL- of growth.
8. This problem must be faced head-on and solved.
9. Let us look at the SOLUTION.

I. THE NEW TESTAMENT'S SOLUTION TO ZERO-GROWTH

1. The solution is: Every member committed to teaching someone else the gospel.
 - (1) In Acts 5:42 TWO fields of Apostolic work is mentioned:
 1. PUBLIC TEACHING at the Temple.
 2. PRIVATE TEACHING at Home.
 - (2) When this was done the church grew -- Acts 6: 1, 7; Acts 5:14.
 - (3) The spirit and conduct of the Apostles is here recorded for an example for us -- Phil. 4:9; I Cor. 11:1.
 - (4) Paul followed these TWO fields of work -- Acts 20:20
 1. There is no substitute for personal contact -- face-to-face; person-to-person teaching.
 - (5) The disciples in Jerusalem did it this way -- Acts 8:4; 11: 19 -21
 - (6) Paul to Timothy -- 2 Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 4:16
2. To do this kind of teaching it takes Total Commitment to the job:
 - (1) I Cor. 15:58
3. In the work of teaching the gospel you will have several rejections:
 - (1) Don't take rejections personal -- Luke 10:16 -- "*He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me*"
 - (2) Jesus had rejections -- John 6: 66 - 68.
 - (3) Paul had rejections:
 1. Felix -- Acts 24: 24 - 25.
 2. Agrippa -- Acts 26: 27 - 32.
 - (4) Don't take rejections so personal, don't give up, and find you somebody else to talk to.

II. WHAT CHRISTIANS MUST REMEMBER

1. REMEMBER there can be no harvest without sowing the seed of the Kingdom.
 - (1) We reap what we sow -- Gal. 6:7 - 8; Luke 8: 11 - 15; Col. 1: 5 - 6
 - (2) If we will sow the precious seed we will come rejoicing "bringing in the sheaves" -- Psa. 126: 5 - 6.
2. We need to remember Haggai's question: "*Is the seed yet in the barn?*"--Hag. 2:19.
 - (1) There can be no crop with the seed in the barn.
 - (2) The church cannot grow without sowing the seed.
 - (3) There must be laborers before there can be a harvest -- Matt. 9: 37 - 38.
 1. Jesus said, "*Lift up your eyes and look on the fields*" -- John 4:35.
 - (4) When we plant the seed, God will give the increase -- I Cor. 3:6; Isa. 55:11.

III. THERE IS STRONG MOTIVATION IN GOD'S WORD FOR TEACHING THE LOST -- Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 3:15

1. We are commanded to teach the lost -- Matt. 28: 19 -20; Mk. 16:15 - 16.
2. We should feel a sense of debt as Paul did -- Rom. 1:14 - 15; I Cor. 9:16.
3. The need of sinners should motivate us to teach the Lost -- Rom. 3: 23; I Thess. 1:8 - 9
4. The love of God and Christ is an incentive to teach the Lost -- Rom. 5:8; John 3:16.
5. Love for others should move us to teach them -- 2 Cor. 5: 14 - 15
 - (1) Andrew loved his brother Peter -- John 1: 41 - 42 "*and brought him to Jesus*".
 - (2) Cornelius loved his kinsmen and near friends -- Acts 10 :24.
6. The example set by early disciples should encourage us to go and teach others -- Acts 8:4; Acts 5: 42.
7. Teaching and baptizing the Lost IS bearing fruit to the Glory of God -- John 15; 1 - 8; Rom. 7:4.
8. A lack of workers is an incentive to teach the Lost:
 - (1) Matt. 9: 37 - 38
 - (2) If we don't teach the Lost, who will??
9. What we believe about the gospel and the church is an incentive:
 - (1) We believe there is ONE church and one must be in it to be saved -- Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23.
 - (2) All outside are Lost -- 2 Thess. 1: 8 - 9.
10. The promise of REWARD should move us to take the gospel to the Lost.
 - (1) 2 Cor. 5:10
 - (2) Rev. 22:14
 - (3) Matt. 25: 46; Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim. 4: 6 - 8; Rev. 2:16.
11. The gospel is never out of season -- 2 Tim. 4: 1- 2.
 - (1) There is always a need to preach the gospel.

IV. EVERY LOCAL CONGREGATION MUST BE COMMITTED TO THE SUPPORTING OF THE GOSPEL.

1. The Local church is the pillar and ground of the truth -- I Tim. 3:15.
2. Every congregation must be committed to the supporting of men who are in the field preaching the gospel:
 - (1) Philippi -- Phil. 1:5; 4: 15 - 18
 - (2) 2 Cor. 11: 8 - 9
3. The Lord has no use for a congregation that does not fulfill its purpose -- Rev. 2:5.

Conclusion

1. Let us ALL decide NOW that we are going to do more in the future than we have in the past.

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LESSON THREE

The Solution to Zero-Growth

Introduction

1. Many congregations are at Zero-level of growth today.
2. Many congregations today are experiencing a decrease in membership today.
3. Many congregations are only baptizing the children of members.
4. This problem must be faced head-on and solved.
5. The answer and solution to the problem must be according to the New Testament.

I. WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT SOLUTION TO GROWTH?

1. The solution is EVERY MEMBER COMMITTED to teaching someone else the gospel.
 - (1) In Acts 5:42 we have TWO FIELDS of Apostolic work mentioned.
 1. "*And daily in the temple*" --PUBLIC TEACHING.
 2. "*In every house*" -- PRIVATE TEACHING.
 - (2) When this was done the church grew.
 1. Acts 5:14
 2. Acts 6:1
 3. Acts 6:7
 - (3) Paul followed these two fields of work -- Acts 20:20.
 1. "*taught you publicly*"
 2. "*from house to house*". . .
 - (4) This is the way the disciples in Jerusalem did:
 1. Acts 8:4
 2. Acts 11: 19 - 21
 - (5) Paul to Timothy
 1. 2 Tim. 2:2; I Tim. 4:16
 - (6) The work of the apostles in spreading the gospel is recorded for an example for us -- Phil. 4:9.
2. To do this kind of teaching it takes TOTAL COMMITMENT to do the job, and loyalty to the commission -- Matt. 28: 19 - 20.
 - (1) Our commitment is to Jesus Christ and to God -- Matt. 6:24; 10:37.
 - (2) It is a daily commitment -- Luke 9:23.
 - (3) It demands Sacrifice and service -- Rom. 12:1; I Cor. 15:58.
 1. Have a list of prospects.
 2. Call them on the phone, pray for them, visit them, do everything within your power to set up a study with them.
 3. Invite some people every week to the services.
 - (4) It demands an undivided heart -- Matt. 6:21; Col. 3:1 - 2; Acts 2:46.

II. TO DO THIS WORK OF TEACHING AND CONVERTING OTHERS TO CHRIST WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR MANY REJECTIONS.

1. When you go forth to teach the gospel many will reject it -- Matt. 13: 3 - 4, 19
2. Don't take the rejections personal:
 - (1) The twelve -- Matt. 10:14
 - (2) Seventy -- Luke 10: 10 - 11
3. They are not rejecting you, but Christ and His gospel -- Luke 10:16.
4. Jesus had rejection -- John 6: 66- 68; 6:60
5. Paul had rejection:
 1. Felix -- Acts 24: 24 - 25
 2. Agrippa -- Acts 26: 26 - 29
6. When you are rejected, DON'T GIVE UP-- find you someone else to talk to and teach. . .

III. WHAT CHRISTIANS MUST REMEMBER AS THEY SOW THE SEED

1. Remember that there can be no harvest without sowing the seed of the Kingdom -- Haggai 2:19 "*Is the seed yet in the barn?*"
 - (1) "*the seed is the Word of God*" -- Luke 8:11
 - (2) "*The word of the Kingdom*" -- Matt. 13:19
 - (3) We reap what we sow -- Gal. 6: 7 - 8.
 - (4) When it is sown it will bring forth fruit -- Col. 1: 5-6.
 - (5) When we plant the seed God will give the increase -- I Cor. 3:6; Isa. 55:11.
2. Remember there must be laborers before there can be a harvest -- Matt. 9: 37 - 38.
3. Remember we need to "*lift up our eyes*" and look on the fields and see the harvest -- John 4:35.
 - (1) This IS harvest time.
 - (2) Harvest time is a busy time.
 - (3) All hands must be at work in harvest time.
 - (4) Harvest work must be done when the fruit is ripe -- so it is urgent and pressing!

IV. STRONG MOTIVATION IN GOD'S WORD FOR TEACHING THE LOST

1. We are commanded to teach the LOST -- Matt. 28: 19 - 20; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 3:15.
2. We should feel a sense of debt as Paul did -- Rom. 1: 14 - 16; I Cor. 9:16.
3. The need of Sinners should motivate us to teach the lost -- Rom. 3:23; 2 Thess. 1: 8 - 9.
4. The love of God and Christ is an incentive to teach the lost -- Rom. 5:8; John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5: 14 - 15.
5. Love for others should move us to teach them:
 - (1) Andrew loved his brother Peter -- John 1: 41 -42.
 - (2) Cornelius loved his kinsmen and near friends -- Acts 10:24.
6. The example set by early disciples should encourage us to go and teach others -- Acts 8:4; Acts 5:42.
7. Teaching and baptizing the lost is bearing fruit to the glory of God -- John 15:8; Rom. 7:4; Col. 1: 5 - 6.
8. A lack of workers is an incentive to teach the lost:
 - (1) Matt. 9: 37 - 38
 - (2) If we don't teach the lost, who will?
9. What we believe about the gospel and the church is an incentive to teach others.
 - (1) We believe there is one church and one must be in it to be saved -- Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23.
 - (2) All outside the church are lost -- 2 Thess. 1: 8 - 9; Mk. 16: 15 - 16.
10. The promise of reward should move us to take the gospel to the lost:
 - (1) 2 Cor. 5:10
 - (2) Rom. 2: 6 - 8
 - (3) 2 Tim. 4: 6 - 8

- (4) I Tim. 4:16
- 11. We must personally teach others for self-preservation:
 - (1) We cannot maintain a vital, spiritual life and not try to save others.
 - (2) John 15:2; I Pet. 3:15; I Cor. 15:58; Phil. 2: 12; James 5: 19 - 20; Gal. 6:1
- 12. To be like CHRIST:
 - (1) Luke 19:10
 - (2) I Pet. 2:21 "*follow His steps*".
- 13. The Gospel is never "out of season" -- 2 Tim. 4: 1 - 2; 2 Cor. 6:2
- 14. Every congregation must be committed to the supporting of men who are in the field of preaching the gospel.
 - (1) Philippi -- Phil. 1:5; 4: 15 - 18
 - (2) 2 Cor. 11:8 - 9

CONCLUSION

- 1. Let us all decide NOW we are going to do more in the future than we have done in the past.

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LESSON FOUR

The Problem of Fragmentation or Division

Introduction

1. One of the great problems we have had in churches of Christ of late is division over NON-DOCTRINAL issues -- Gen. 13:8.
2. Brethren just WON'T get along with one another.
3. The carnal spirit prevails in many places -- I Cor. 3:3.
4. Let's study the Causes, the Evil, and the Cure for Division.

I. THE CAUSES OF DIVISION

1. FACTIOUS MEN -- Paul said, "*A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse,*" -- Tit. 3:10; "*Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition*" (ASV).
 - (1) A Factious man is "an agitator who creates divisions and makes parties" *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
 - (2) *Vine* defines Factious: "denotes ambition, self-seeking and self-will being an underlying idea in the word"
 - (3) *Vine*: "Faction is the fruit of jealousy".
 - (4) A factious man is self-ambitious, self-seeking, and self-willed.
 - (5) A person who is self-willed is so dedicated to appeasing self that he will do it at all cost.
 - (6) Self-ambitious men bring confusion in congregations -- James 3:167; Gal. 5:20.
 - (7) A factious man seeks to win followers; he is a "party-maker".
 1. He draws disciples after him -- Acts 20:30.
 - (8) He is a LITTLE MAN who seeks to be BIG.
 - (9) DIOTREPHESES was such a man-- III John 9:10
 1. He was proud, arrogant, and insensitive.
 2. He was power-loving and he did much harm to the church.
 3. Diotrephes was not interested in the peace and prosperity of the church, but of being first in the church, even at the expense of its peace and prosperity.
 4. He would be first and chief of all at any cost.
 - (1) Warning --I Cor. 3:17
 5. He defamed the fairest reputation -- III John 10; Gal. 5:15
2. PERSONAL MATTERS
 - (1) Disturbances between two or more brethren over business affairs.
 - (2) Disturbances between couples over children and other matters.
 - (3) Disturbances over family matters.
 - (4) These matters should be settled personally -- Matt. 18: 15 - 17.
 - (5) Many times a whole congregation becomes involved in personal matters.

3. INACTIVITY

- (1) In every congregation there is a certain amount of vitality which must and will find expression in some way.
- (2) Inactivity promotes discontentment.
- (3) Discontentment grows into a spirit of dissatisfaction with each other.
- (4) We are to be busy at work -- Phil. 2:12 - 14; I Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:16; Rom. 12: 4 - 21.

4. THE RULE OF OPINION

- (1) Pure religion is essentially a religion of faith -- 2 Cor. 5:7.
- (2) Faith is no broader than REVELATION -- Rom. 10:17; I Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9.
- (3) Faith is the basis of all acceptable obedience to God -- Heb. 11:6; 11: 4, 8.
- (4) The opinions of men bring division among God's people -- Matt. 10: 34 - 38; Luke 12:51.

II. THE EVILS OF DIVISION

1. The unpleasantness of Division.

- (1) The factious spirit in a congregation manifests itself in the home, in business affairs, and in social life of the members.
- (2) Unity is good and pleasant -- Psa. 133:1.

2. Division hinders progress.

- (1) A church in confusion and strife cannot hope to do very much in converting their neighbors.
- (2) Our ACTIONS are a more POTENT comment on our conception of righteousness than anything we can say.
- (3) A congregation, by its strife, contributes to the damnation of those it should save:
 1. Our young people.
 2. Our neighbors.

3. It leads to sins of all sorts:

- (1) Gal. 5:15
- (2) James 3: 14 - 16
- (3) I Cor. 3: 1 - 3
- (4) Heb. 12: 14 - 15 "*root of bitterness*"
 1. Many be defiled

4. The effects of division on members:

- (1) Those who are not a party to division are disturbed, discouraged, and many times drift into unfaithfulness.
- (2) Those who are responsible for the division have destroyed him for whom Christ died -- I Cor. 8:11 -12; Rom. 14:13; Matt. 25:40.

III. THE CURE FOR DIVISION

1. All must accept ALL the truth -- John 17: 20 - 21.
2. All must DESIRE to promote the unity of the Spirit -- Eph. 4: 1 - 3.
3. All must be ready to concede and co-operate -- Phil. 2 : 2- 5; Eph. 4: 2 - 3; Eph. 5:21; I Pet. 5:5; I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 4:5 "*yield personal rights*".
4. All must DENY SELF -- Luke 9: 23; Rom. 15:1; Rom. 12:10.
5. There must be mutual love for one another -- John 13: 34 - 35; Phil. 2:2; I Pet. 1:22; I John 4: 19 - 21; Rom. 13: 8 - 10; I Thess. 5:13; Rom. 12:16.

IV. THE DESIRABILITY OF UNITY

1. David said it is both "*good and pleasant*"-- Psa. 133:1
2. Paul urged it -- I Cor. 1:10.
3. Peter exhorted it -- I Pet. 3: 8 - 9.

4. Jesus prayed for it -- John 17: 20 - 21.

CONCLUSION

1. The Unity of the New Testament demands:
 1. That brethren agree on the word of God -- John 17: 20 - 21.
 2. That we speak the same thing -- I Cor. 1: 10.
 3. Effort to keep it -- Eph. 4:3.
 4. There be no schism in the body -- I Cor. 12: 25.
 5. That brethren stand together against all evil -- Eph. 6: 10 - 17.

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LESSON FIVE

The Problem of the Destruction of the Family

Introduction

1. The "SEXUAL REVOLUTION" of the 60's, 70's, and 80's has eaten like a cancer into the moral fiber of the people of this country.
2. It has had its greatest effect on the Home in this country.
3. Statistics like:
 - (1) One out of two marriages ending in divorce.
 - (2) One million divorces a year in this country.
 - (3) One child out of every six children being from a broken home.
4. Almost one out of three teenagers 13 to 15 years old, and six out of ten 16 - 18 year olds say that they have had sexual relations.
5. Some surveys show 54% of married women have been unfaithful; the percentage of men is higher -- 75% - 83%.
6. A survey by Cosmopolitan in 1980 showed 41% of the young wives had been adulterous.
7. The social landscape for adultery in this country:
 - (1) Scientific development in birth control has caused women not to fear becoming pregnant.
 - (2) Many women are in the work force; these jobs provide a woman, who has adulterous inclinations, with opportunity she needs to meet a partner and be with him while her husband things she is working.
 - (3) Our national preoccupation with SELF -- everybody is hunting "self-fulfillment" -- the very nature of adultery is selfishness.
8. A lesson we must learn is that whatever affects the society about us affects the church.
9. We are a "called out" body; WASHED, SANCTIFIED, JUSTIFIED -- I Cor. 6:11.
 - (1) Things like fornication and adultery are part of the world and we have to put them to death in our lives -- Col. 3:5.
 - (2) This sin is not to be "*named once among you*"--Col. 3:5.

I. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN THAT MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE.

1. Gen. 2: 21 - 24
2. Matt. 19: 3 - 6
3. Rom. 7: 2 - 3; I Cor. 7:39
4. God has been witness between a man and his wife when they entered into this life-long covenant -- Mal. 2:14.
5. God joins a man and wife together -- Matt. 19:6.
6. God HATES putting away -- Mal. 2:16.

II. WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN THE MEANING OF LOVE IN MARRIAGE.

1. A husband and wife are to LOVE each other.
 - (1) Eph. 5:25
 - (2) Tit. 2:4
2. Paul tells husbands certain things about the love they are to have for their wives in Eph. 5: 25 - 31.
 - (1) It must be a SACRIFICIAL LOVE.
 1. He must love her as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it -- Eph. 5:25.
 2. This Love is *Agape* love.
 3. A love willing to seek another's wellbeing at the sacrifice, if need be, of one's own interests.
 4. A love which is ready to make any sacrifice for her GOOD.
 - (2) It must be a PURIFYING LOVE -- Eph. 5: 26 - 27.
 1. Christ purified the church in Her obedience to His will.
 2. Christ seeks the purity of His people -- Matt. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:22.
 3. A husband that loves his wife seeks her purity -- 2 Cor. 11: 2.
 - (3) It must be a CARING LOVE -- Eph. 5: 28 - 29.
 1. Caring love is opposite of being selfish.
 2. Real love always cherishes the one it loves.
 3. Caring love always puts the wife's needs before the husband's:
 - (1) Her physical needs -- food, shelter, and raiment -- I Tim. 5:8.
 - (2) Her emotional needs -- love, affection, and conjugal rights -- Eph. 5:25, 28 - 29; I Cor. 7: 2 - 5; Ex. 21:10.
 - (3) Every wife needs companionship love, compassionate love, romantic love, affectionate love, and passionate love.
 - (4) It is unbreakable love -- Eph. 5:31; Matt. 19:5- 6.
 - a. For the sake of this love the husband has for his wife, he leaves father and mother and cleaves to his wife.
 - b. They become one flesh.
 - c. He is as united to her as the members of the body are united to each other.
 - d. He no more thinks of separating from her than he would think of tearing his own body apart.

III. YOUNG WOMEN MUST BE TAUGHT

1. That God's plan for marital happiness involves the man being the HEAD of the wife and the wife being his counterpart -- Eph. 5: 22 - 25; I Pet. 3:1; I Cor. 11:9; 11:3.
 - (1) She must submit because God commanded it -- I Pet. 3:6.
2. Young women must be taught to love their husbands -- Tit. 2:4.
3. Young women are to be taught when they marry that they should bear children -- I Tim. 5:14; I Tim. 2:15.
 - (1) Children are an "*heritage of the Lord*"-- Psa. 127: 3.
4. Young women should be taught no one can be happy in marriage unless they GIVE HAPPINESS to their companion; you cannot have happiness without giving it -- Acts 20:35.
 - (1) Two kinds of People in the world:
 1. Those who always want to get.
 2. Those who GIVE.
 - (2) The "getter" ends up frustrated and unhappy in marriage.
5. Young women should be taught they are to help create a "NEST"-- a warm, nurturing place for her and her husband to retreat from the storms of life.
 - (1) The home is a place to relax , be accepted and be encouraged.

- (2) Marriage partners must help each other with encouragement and support.
- (3) The Lord will take care of your family without you having to work day and night -- Psa. 127:2.
- 6. Children are God's gift -- Psa. 127:3.
 - (1) They are a blessing and not a burden.
- 7. Children must be taught about the Lord -- Eph. 6: 1 - 4.
 - (1) Family Bible study
 - (2) Family Prayer
 - (3) They must be brought to the Bible classes in the local congregation.
 - (4) They must be taught to respect good men in the church.
 - (5) They must be given a high standard of conduct morally to live up to.

IV. YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE TAUGHT THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR MARRIAGE.

- 1. BEFORE ONE IS READY TO MARRY, HE OR SHE MUST BE MATURE:
 - (1) Marriage is the sharing of life with another.
 - (2) No immature person can do that.
- 2. DEPENDABLE-- CAN BE TRUSTED.
 - (1) Prov. 31: 10 -11
- 3. CAPABLE OF LOVING ANOTHER PERSON.
 - (1) Many people can only love themselves -- 2 Tim. 3: 2, 3
- 4. DISCIPLINED TO WORK
 - (1) I Tim. 5:8; 2 Thess. 3:10.
 - (2) Tit. 2: 4 - 5
- 5. UNSELFISHNESS
 - (1) Know how to put another person's needs BEFORE YOUR OWN.
 - 1. Eph. 5:28
 - 2. I Cor. 7:3
- 6. MORAL PURITY
 - (1) 2 Tim. 2:22; I Tim. 5: 2
 - (2) Think on what is pure -- Phil. 4:8; Mk. 7: 20 - 23; Matt. 5:28

PROBLEMS

*God's People Must Face And Solve To Assure Strong, Growing Congregations
For The Next Generation*

LESSON SIX

The Problem of Bible Ignorance

I. CHRISTIANS DON'T KNOW GOD AND CHRIST, AND MANY HAVE NO PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM.

1. God wants us to know Him -- Jer. 31: 34.
2. We are to increase in the knowledge of God -- Col. 1:10.
3. We are to increase in the knowledge of Christ -- Eph. 4:13, 20 - 21.
4. Man needs a personal relationship with God and Christ:
 - (1) All who obey the gospel are forgiven of their sins and have come into fellowship with God and Christ.
 1. I John 1: 3 - 4
 2. I John 1: 7
 3. I Cor. 1:9
 - (2) By faith we are to walk with Him daily -- 2 Cor. 5:7.
 1. Enoch walked with God -- Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5
 - (3) The Lord is NEAR (at hand) to His children -- Phil. 4:5; Acts 17:27.
 - (4) We are to constantly TALK with Him -- Phil. 4:6 - 7; Luke 18:1; I Thess. 5:17.
 - (5) We are to cast all our care upon Him -- I Pet. 5:7.
 - (6) He seeks our worship -- John 4: 23 -24.
 - (7) We are to trust Him for our every need -- Matt. 6: 25 - 33; Psa. 11: 1; 16:1.
 - (8) God loves and pities us -- Psa. 103: 13; I John 4: 19.
5. How does one develop a strong relationship with God and Christ?
 - (1) By being followers of God and Christ daily -- Eph. 5:1; Lk. 9:23.
 - (2) By reading the Bible daily:
 1. The Word of God is God's message to us -- Heb. 1: 1 - 2.
 2. It will only meet our needs if we read it -- I Thess. 2:13; Psa. 119:11.
 3. It has the answer to our daily problems -- 2 Tim. 3: 16 - 17.
 4. It is impossible for anyone who does not regularly read God's Word to become a strong Christian -- Heb. 5: 12 -14.
 - (3) By Praying daily -- Phil. 4:6.
 1. His ears are open unto our prayers -- I Pet. 3:12.
 2. We need God's help daily:
 - (1) Daily physical needs -- Matt. 6:11.
 - (2) We need daily forgiveness -- Matt. 6:12.
 - (3) We need daily help to overcome temptation -- Matt. 6:13; I Cor. 10:13.
 - (4) Tribulations draw us closer to the Lord and make us realize how helpless we are without Him -- Eccl. 7: 14; Rom. 5: 3- 4.
 - (5) Meditate on God's will daily (to ponder).
 1. Psa. 1:2
 2. Psa. 63:6

3. Psa. 77:12
4. Psa. 119: 15
5. Psa. 19:14
6. Psa. 4:4
- (6) We need to be teaching and sharing the gospel with people daily:
 1. I Pet. 3:15
 2. Acts 5:42
 3. 2 Tim. 2:2
- (7) We need to attend the services of the church regularly:
 1. Heb. 10: 19 -25
 2. Matt. 18: 19 - 20
- (8) For Christ to control my life I must have a daily commitment:
 1. Luke 9:23
- (9) I must learn to trust God for temporal needs:
 1. Matt. 6: 25 - 33
 2. Heb. 13:5
- (10) When members of the church develop a relationship with God and Christ, that God intended us to have, we will see a big turn-around in the Lord's church.

II. MEMBERS GENERALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

1. What are the cause of Bible ignorance today?
 - (1) A lack of desire to know God's will -- I Pet. 2:2; Matt. 5:6.
 - (2) Improper use of TIME:
 1. Too much time given to things of a worldly nature:
 - (1) TV
 - (2) Sports
 - (3) Reading the paper and other books
 - (4) Hobbies
 - (3) Lack of MOTIVATION
 1. We have to have motivation to do anything.
 - (4) LAZINESS -- study is hard work -- Eccl. 12:12 "*Much study is a weariness of the flesh*"
 - (5) People do not know how to learn effectively.
 - (6) Poor job of teaching done in the Local congregation.
 - (7) Physical fatigue -- some are never rested.
2. What Bible ignorance will do to God's People:
 - (1) It will cause them to be destroyed -- Hos. 4:6
 - (2) They will not be prepared to overcome sin -- Psa. 119:11
 - (3) They will lose their faith -- Rom. 10:17
 - (4) They will not be able to teach others -- I Pet. 3:15.
3. What will help us to be better Bible students?
 - (1) Realize God has commanded us to study -- 2 Tim. 2:15
 - (2) God does not want us to be ignorant of His will -- I Cor. 10:11; I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:17
 - (3) Motivation:
 1. Start trying to teach someone-- their questions will motivate you to study.
 2. Realize the Bible answers all your moral and religious problems.
4. Knowledge of the truth frees man spiritually -- John 8: 32

III. WE ARE WITHOUT ZEAL MANY TIMES.

1. Solomon said, "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*"-- Eccl. 9:10

2. Paul said, "*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men*" -- Col. 3:23.
3. Christians must have KNOWLEDGE and ZEAL to get the Lord's work done:
 - (1) Knowledge gives direction.
 - (2) Zeal provides the push.
4. Put them together and you have a winning combination.
5. Zeal is unmistakable evidence that you are wholehearted in what you are doing.
6. Without zeal no battles have every been won and no souls are converted.
7. Zeal is the explanation to many a success.
8. The development of zeal:
 - (1) There is nothing more creative of zeal than a sense of who God is.
 - (2) A look at the LOST should provide a spark of intense ZEAL -- John 4:35.

PROBLEMS

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LESSON SEVEN

The Problem of Seeing Everybody's Problems But Our Own

Introduction

1. Man has always had the problem of not wanting to face his own problems.
 - (1) Adam wanted to lay his sin on Eve -- Gen. 3:12.
 - (2) Eve wanted to lay the sin on the Serpent -- Gen. 3:13.
 - (3) Cain tried to avoid his sin of killing his brother -- Gen. 4:9.
2. Jesus warns us about being able to see a "mote" in our brother's eye when we have a "beam" in our own eye -- Matt. 7: 1 - 5.
3. The Jews of Paul's day -- Rom. 2:1, 21 - 23.
4. The church at Laodicea -- Rev. 3: 14 - 19.

I. WE TODAY CAN SEE THE PROBLEMS OF LIBERAL CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

1. We can see the Social Gospel:
 - (1) Blood Mobile day
 - (2) Building Family-Life centers.
 - (3) Valentine banquets
 - (4) Mother-Son breakfasts
 - (5) Father-Daughter breakfasts
 - (6) Toy drives.
 - (7) Junior high hayride.
 - (8) Babysitting services
 - (9) Meal-on-wheels
 - (10) Sewing classes
 - (11) Kindergarten
 - (12) "Christian Camp"
 - (13) Hand clapping worship
 - (14) The belief that "One doesn't have to understand the design of Baptism"
 - (15) Liberal preachers putting no scriptures in their sermons, using tales and illustrations instead.
 - (16) The belief that "One cannot know the truth"
 - (17) The belief that "God's grace excludes obedience".
2. We can see what is wrong with their HUMAN INSTITUTIONS.
3. We see their failure to work as individuals.
4. We see them lose their children to the world and denominations.
5. We see their emphasis on material buildings.
6. We see they are failing to preach fundamentals (not preaching the plan of salvation).
7. They try to draw people with carnal rewards.
8. We see their pride in men -- calling their preachers "Doctor".
9. We see their divisions.
10. We see their false teaching . . .

II. WE CAN SEE THE PROBLEMS OF DENOMINATIONALISM

1. Membership losses by mainline Protestant denominations in the past decade have been staggering:
 - (1) In 1980 alone, the United Methodist church lost 69,000 members.
 - (2) The Episcopal church lost 55,000.
 - (3) The United Presbyterian church lost 53,000.
 - (4) The United Church of Christ lost 9,000.
 - (5) The American Lutheran Church lost 9,000.
 - (6) Total Lutheran membership in the United States and Canada fell by 23,950 from 1980 to 1981.
2. The Garden Grove Community church (The Crystal Cathedral) lost its property tax exemption because of the increasing use of church facilities for commercial purposes.

III. WE CAN SEE OUR OWN PROBLEMS, IF WE WILL LOOK!

1. 2 Cor. 13:5; I Cor. 1:26; Rom. 13: 11 - 14
2. We can SEE we are not converting many people out of the world.
3. We can SEE we are losing many of our children.
4. We can SEE our fragmentation over non-doctrinal issues.
5. We can SEE we are not working to convert our friends and neighbors.
6. We can SEE we are involved in Materialism.
7. We can SEE the destruction of the family.
8. We can SEE people among us who call themselves "Christians" involved in Adultery and Fornication.
9. We can SEE that family life is not what it ought to be:
 - (1) Families don't pray enough together.
 - (2) Families don't study enough together.
 - (3) Families don't talk enough together.
 - (4) Families don't eat together.
10. We can SEE doctrinal SOFTNESS AMONG US.
 - (1) Many want a positive "FELT NEED" "Gospel" -- Jer. 10:23.
 - (2) They want sermons on "Self-esteem" and "ego" -- Luke 9: 23.
 - (3) They want sermons on "Inter-personal relationships" -- Matt. 10: 34 - 37.
 - (4) They want a religion of entertainment and fun -- Rom. 14:17.
 - (5) The SINGLE PURPOSE of the gospel is SPIRITUAL: to save our soul in heaven to the glory of God -- Rom. 1:16; Mk. 16: 15 - 16; 2 Tim. 3:15 - 17.
 1. The gospel meets our TRUE NEEDS; they are not "felt needs".
 2. The gospel has power to CONQUER SIN and ERROR -- I Cor. 6: 9 - 11; 2 Cor. 10:3 - 5.
 3. The gospel is at WAR with every form of WICKEDNESS, and makes no offer to compromise, accommodate, or surrender -- Eph. 6: 10 - 17.
 4. The forces of darkness cannot withstand the light of Christ-- they must finally surrender or else flee from exposure -- John 3: 19 -21; James 4:7.
 5. The gospel of the grace of God causes men to tremble in their sins -- Acts 24:25.
11. We can SEE the worldliness among us.
 - (1) The way men and women dress immodestly -- I Tim. 2: 9 - 10; Gal. 5:19.
 - (2) Young people are not restrained from attending any worldly activity:
 1. School dances
 2. R-rated movies
 3. Many are like Eli -- "*he restrained them not*" -- I Sam. 3:13.
 - (3) Vulgar talk goes on among members of the church -- Eph. 4: 29; 5:4.
 - (4) Many members curse.
 - (5) All kinds of hurtful gossip is carried on -- I Pet. 2:1; I Tim. 5:13.

12. We can SEE many members don't attend the services as they should:
 - (1) The least little thing will keep them away.
 - (2) Some don't attend gospel meetings as they should.
 - (3) Heb. 10:25.
13. We can SEE many members don't attend Bible Study periods as they should.
 - (1) Children are in class about half of the time.
14. We can SEE we have many wrong attitudes about many things in the church.
 - (1) 2 Tim. 3: 1- 6
15. We can SEE some never learn to give their money to the Lord's work.
 - (1) I Cor. 16: 1- 2
 - (2) 2 Cor. 9: 6 - 7
16. We can SEE we are NOT supporting enough men in the field.
 - (1) I Cor. 1:21
17. We can SEE some congregations are too involved in the Social things.
18. We can SEE some are departing from safe ground in their teaching.
 - (1) Grace (Calvinism).
 - (2) Marriage and Divorce.
 - (3) Worldliness.
 - (4) Mental positive attitude "Gospel" for the true gospel -- John 16: 8; 2 Tim. 4:2.
 - (5) Woman's place in the church -- I Tim. 2: 11 - 15.

CONCLUSION

1. We can SEE, if we will look, THAT WE MUST MAKE A LOT OF CHANGES.
2. If we don't make these changes, we may be living in the generation in which the church almost died out in the United States!