THINGS THAT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

A Series of Lessons

by

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THINGS THAT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH
Galatians 5:7
LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Bible speaks about things which hinder:
    (1) Paul said the gospel could be hindered. I Cor. 9:12
    (2) Jesus said men could be hindered from entering the kingdom. Luke 11:52; Matt. 23:13
    (3) One can be hindered from being baptized. Acts 8:36
    (4) Peter said a Christian's prayers can be hindered. I Pet. 3:7
    (5) Paul said Christians could be hindered from obeying the truth. Gal. 5:7
    (6) Paul said Satan hinders. I Thess. 2:18
2. In these lessons we want to look at some things which hinder spiritual progress and also to look at some things which do not hinder.
3. In this lesson we will look at some things which do NOT hinder.

I. GOD DOES NOT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. God so loved lost man that He gave His only begotten son. John 3:16; I Pet. 3:18
2. God would have all men saved. I Tim. 2:4
3. God is longsuffering that men might be saved. II Pet. 3:15
4. God is not slack concerning His promise. II Pet. 3:9
5. God planned the church from the beginning of the world. Eph. 3: 9 - 11 (Eternal purpose)
    (1) He planned the conditions of salvation
    (2) He planned the organization of the church.
    (3) He planned the work of the church.

II. CHRIST DOES NOT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. Christ came to seek and to save the lost. Luke 19:10
2. He gave Himself for the church. Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28
3. He gave up the glories of heaven to save men. Phil. 2: 6 - 8
4. The growth of the church depends on Christ. Col. 2:19
    (1) This is the reason we must have authority for all we do.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES NOT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. The Holy Spirit revealed God's word to us. John 16:13; Eph. 3: 1 - 5; I Cor. 2: 9 -13
2. He has given us the pattern for the church and it is sufficient. II Tim. 3: 16 - 17

IV. THE BIBLE DOES NOT HINDER THE GROWTH OF A CONGREGATION

1. The Bible has the answer to all our problems. II Tim. 3: 16 - 17; II Pet. 1:3; I Pet. 1: 23 -25
    (1) Every moral problem that arises in your life, the answer is found in the Bible.
    (2) Every problem that faces the church, the answer is found in the Bible.

V. FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS DO NOT HINDER THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

1. The lives of faithful Christian draw men and women to God. Matt. 5: 13 - 16; I Pet. 4:16; Phil. 2: 15
2. No sinner has ever been impressed with the idea that the church is unimportant by Christians who attend its services regularly.

VI. PREACHING THE TRUTH DOES NOT HINDER THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

1. Paul told Timothy to preach the word at all times. II Tim. 4: 1 - 5
2. Paul to the Ephesian elders. Acts 20:20; 20: 26 - 27
3. It will be hindered if it is not preached. Gal. 5:7
4. The truth must be preached and defended. I Tim. 3:15; Phil. 1:17; Jude 3

VII. PRAYER DOES NOT HINDER THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

1. The Jerusalem church. Acts 2:42; Acts 12:5
2. James 5:16; I Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6: 18 - 19

TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss the doctrine of predestination or foreordination in light of Bible teaching. The doctrine stated: *"Some men are predestinated to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death."*
2. Discuss, in light of Bible teaching ,the modern idea that man can change the church and its organization, its work and plan of salvation.
3. Discuss: "Did Christ have a different mission in the world than His church has?"
4. Discuss the claim of the modern religionist that the Bible does not have the answer to all of man's moral problems -- "The New Morality".
5. Discuss reasons why God is not giving revelation today.
6. Discus the influence of unfaithful members.
7. Discuss what a failure to stand for the truth will do to a congregation.
8. Discuss the importance of prayer.

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LESSON 2

INTRODUCTION:
1. In the first lesson our study had to do with things which do not hinder; this lesson has to do with things that do hinder.
2. The only way we can overcome these hindrances is to know what they are.

I. THE UNTAUGHT HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. When I speak of the untaught, I mean those who are relatively untaught -- literally, no untaught person could be in the church. Matt. 28: 19 - 20
2. The church is filled with people who know little or nothing beyond the very first principles of the gospel.
    (1) Just like the Hebrews -- Heb. 5: 12 - 14
3. The untaught and false teachers.
    (1) The false teacher would be powerless if it were not for the untaught in the church.
    (2) Eph. 4: 11 -16
4. The untaught and plain preaching.
    (1) These people have a belligerent attitude toward the preacher. They create unrest in the congregation.
    (2) They talk about the preacher and get others dissatisfied with his work.
    (3) Much harm has been done by the untaught by their apologies for the truth when it has been preached or taught in the class room.
5. The untaught are lacking in moral judgment.
    (1) Christians are not of the world. John 15: 18 - 19; 17:16
    (2) They are forbidden to love the things of this world. I John 2: 15 -17
    (3) They must have the moral and spiritual discrimination to discern the difference. Heb. 5: 12 - 14
6. The untaught and indifference:
    (1) Indifference -- just plain being unconcerned, is gnawing away at the very vitals of the church today.
    (2) Yet, it is the ignorant and untaught who are self-satisfied, complacent and lack a sense of urgency.
    (3) The untaught are responsible for much of our lack of growth in the church.

II. WHEN THE CHURCH FAILS TO HAVE A HEALTHY ATTITUDE TOWARD CORRECTIVE TEACHING, CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH IS HINDERED.

1. Sin must be rebuked. Eph. 5:11; II Tim. 4:2
2. Public sin demands public rebuke. I Tim. 5:20; Gal. 2: 11 -14

3. Paul, in the letter to Corinth, rebuked their sins.
    (1) Their divisions were rebuked. I Cor. 1: 10: 13; 3: 1 - 6
    (2) He rebuked them for allowing a fornicator to be among them and they had taken no disciplinary action. I Cor. 5: 1 - 5
4. When a congregation does not want corrective teaching it will not grow spiritually.

III. THE CHURCH IS HINDERED BY MEN WHO WREST THE SCRIPTURES

1. Peter said men in the first century were wresting the scriptures. II Pet. 3: 15 -17
    (1) The word "wrest" means to twist, to turn from the proper position, to pervert.
    (2) It is a fact that men do wrest the scriptures. Matt. 7: 15; I John 4: 1; Acts 20: 28 - 30
2. How men wrest the scriptures:
    (1) They fail to give the whole context and isolate a verse.
    (2) Examples:
        a. The doctrine of faith only -- Acts 16: 30 - 31 -- context - verses 32 - 34 in light of other Bible teaching - James 2:24
        b. The doctrine that the church is to help the world -- Gal. 6:10 -- context - Gal. 6: 1 - 9.
    (3) Men wrest the scriptures by not rightly dividing the word. II Tim. 2:15
        a. Many make no distinction between the law of Moses and the law of Christ today.
        b. God did away with the law of Moses. Col. 2:14; II Cor. 3:11
        c. Today we are to hear Christ. Heb. 1: 1 -2; Matt. 17:5
    (4) Many read the Bible in light of their preconceived ideas or in light of some creed written by men.
        a. Creeds say that baptism is not essential to salvation -- so many read "FOR" in Acts 2:38 to mean "because of". The same "FOR" is in Matt. 26:28 -- "IN ORDER TO...."
        b. They read "branch" to mean "denomination" in John 15: 1 - 6
        c. Brethren read "himself" to mean "church" in James 1:27

TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

1. Where do you think much of the blame lies for much of the ignorance in the church today?
2. Discuss how a false teacher gets a foot-hold in a congregation.
3. Discuss what a congregation can do to have a better informed membership.
4. Discuss when sins need public rebuke.
5. Discuss how some men wrest the scriptures today.
6. Discuss why many people in many congregations have an unhealthy attitude toward corrective teaching.
7. Discuss some other passages that denominational people and brethren wrest.
8. Discuss the sinfulness of wresting God's word.

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LESSON 3

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is the third lesson on things that hinder congregational growth.
2. Let us go right into the lesson.

I. UNFRIENDLINESS WILL HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. Unfriendliness has driven many away from the church. Prov. 18:24
2. No congregation needs "cliques" or "clans" that run into huddles just as soon as services are over.
3. Nor does any congregation need people to who run for the door when services are over like the house is on fire.
4. All need to try to meet and speak to the visitors first.
5. Friendliness costs so little, and means so much.

II. PETTY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BRETHREN HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. The factious spirit in a congregation manifests itself in the home as well as in social and business affairs.
   (1) The factious spirit was in the church at Corinth. I Cor. 3:3; I Cor. 1: 10 -13
2. It leads to sins of all sorts. Gal. 5: 15
   (1) To consume one another is to destroy one another's character by unholy wranglings. James 3:16
3. The effect disunity has on members of the church:
   (1) Those who are not a party to the strife are disturbed in their relationship to the church.
   (2 Many times these people become discouraged and drift away from the church.
4. Causes of strife in a congregation:
   (1) Personal matters: Two or more brethren have a misunderstanding, and before it is over they involve the entire congregation. Matt. 18: 15 - 17
   (2) The fault-finding attitude: Find something wrong with everything and everybody. Matt. 7: 1 - 5
   (3) The rule of opinion.
   (4) The attitude that everybody must do things in his personal life just like I do them. Rom. 14: 1 - 10
   (5) Inactivity.

III. THE PREACHER TRYING TO DO EVERYTHING HIMSELF HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH.

1. What the preacher is not:

(1) Not to serve tables, this is deacon's work. Acts 6: 1 - 4
(2) He is not the pastor or overseer of the church, this is elder's work. Acts 20:28
(3) He is not the purchasing agent of the church.
(4) He is not to do all the personal work of the church, nor all the visiting of the sick; this everyone's job. Matt. 25: 31 - 40
(5) It is not his job to settle all the family fights and to take in all the personal problems of the congregation.

2. The work of the preacher or evangelist is a definite work to be done. II Tim. 4:5
   (1) This work is a gift of Christ to the church. Eph. 4: 8, 11
   (2) It is God's plan to save the lost through preaching. I Cor. 1:21
3. Scriptural descriptions of the preacher:
   (1) Evangelist: II Tim. 4:5; Eph. 4:11; Acts 21: 8; "A messenger of good" *Vine*
   (2) Preacher: I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11 --"proclaims a message".
   (3) Minister: Eph. 3:7; I Tim. 4:6
      a. Minister describes his relationship to what he does; he is a servant, not a master.
      b. He is a spiritual servant rather than a physical servant. Acts 6: 1 - 4
4. The work of the preacher is:
   (1) Reading, meditating and preparing his sermons and lessons. I Tim. 4: 13 -16; II Tim. 2: 15; Psa. 1:2
   (2) Preaching and teaching whenever opportunity affords. Acts 8: 5, 40; I Tim. 1:3; Acts 20:20
   (3) He is to guard the faith. I Tim. 6: 20 -21; Jude 3; Phil. 1:17
   (4) Baptize. Acts 8: 12
   (5) Help complete the organization of the church. Tit. 1:5
   (6) To indoctrinate the church. Tit. 2:1
   (7) Warn against dangers of apostasy. I Tim. 4: 1 -6
   (8) He is to be an example. I Tim. 4: 12

TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss why congregations as a whole are unfriendly.
2. Discuss what a congregation can do to bring about a more friendly atmosphere.
3. Discuss what the factious spirit will do to a congregation.
4. Discuss how the factious spirit can be kept out of a congregation.
5. Discuss what congregations should do if a factious spirit arises.
6. Discuss the many misconceptions people have about a preacher and his work.
7. Discuss the importance of the work of a preacher.
8. Discuss why the preacher is not the pastor, and why he is not to be called <u>reverend</u> or <u>doctor</u>.

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LESSON 4

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are many things that hinder congregational growth that need our study.
2. The purpose of these lessons is to point these things out that we might overcome them.

I. THE DEFEATEST ATTITUDE HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. It does not take much to defeat some brethren.
2. Just a little opposition, and they are ready to quit.
   (1) Paul is a good example to keep in mind to help us overcome this attitude. I Cor. 11:1; II Cor. 11: 23 - 28
3. Some brethren try something one time and if it does not work, they are ready to quit. Gal. 6:9
4. Some churches have a defeated attitude before they start.
   (1) They say, "Nobody in this community (or town) wants to hear the gospel.
   (2) Therefore, they never reach anybody with the gospel.
5. We have to do some positive thinking if we are to have success.

II. INEFFICIENT LEADERSHIP HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. One can measure the growth and progress of a congregation by measuring the leadership.
2. No organization will go above its leadership in work and progress.
3. The leadership of a congregation needs to be thinking 12 months ahead of the congregation at all times.
4. No congregation is going to be as effective in its work that does not have elders.
   (1) This is God's order. Acts 14: 23
   (2) These men are to have qualities of leadership. I Tim. 3: 1 - 7
5. Some qualities of good leadership:
   (1) A determination to do right. Psa. 1:2
   (2) Strong convictions. II Cor. 4:13
   (3) A genuine and fervent love for Christ and His church. Acts 5: 41 - 42
   (4) Dependability. I Cor. 15:58
   (5) Ability to make a decision for oneself based on facts. Phil. 1:10
   (6) Ability to hear and weigh what others have to say. Tit. 1:7

III. UNTRAINED MEMBERSHIP HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. An untrained membership is the result of inefficient leadership.
2. A congregation that is going to grow must ever be training its members.

(1) Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Luke 11:1
(2) Paul to Timothy. II Tim. 2:2
(3) The second part of the great commission. Matt. 28:20
(4) The Hebrews had failed to develop. Heb. 5: 12 - 14
(5) Study. Eph. 4: 18 - 16

3. Men have to be taught how to pray, teach, be elders, and preachers.

IV. MEMBERS WHO WILL NOT WORK HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. Most congregations have members who won't even attend services, and these members do no work at all.
2. Most of the time these kind of members can tell everyone else what he ought to be doing.
3. The New Testament teaches that every Christian must be a worker.
   (1) I Cor. 15:58 -- This admonition is addressed to "my beloved brethren".
      a. Not just to elders.
      b . Not just to preachers.
      c. Not just to deacons.
      d. It is to every Christian.
   (2) The parable of the talents. Matt. 25: 14 - 30

V. THE SIN OF NEGLECT HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. The Jerusalem church was guilty of neglect. Acts 6:1
2. The song service is neglected. Col. 3:16
   (1) Only a few sing praises.
   (2) Neglect to train song leaders.
   (3) Songs are dragged so slow it make one tired to sing.
3. Teaching program is neglected. Matt. 28: 19 - 20
   (1) Bible classes are dead many times because no one has made proper preparation, including the teacher.
   (2) Uninformed teachers cannot produce informed students.
   (3) All of this result in an ignorant church. Hosea 4:6; Heb. 5: 12 -14
4. Neglecting to restore the fallen. Gal. 6:1; James 5: 19 - 20
5. Neglecting to help the poor saints. Acts 6:1
6. Neglecting to discipline the ungodly. I Cor. 5:1 - 5; II Thess. 3:6; 3: 10 -14
7. Neglecting to preach the gospel to the lost. Matt. 28: 19 - 20
8. Anything will fail if neglected. Prov. 24: 30 - 34

TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss why some brethren are so easily defeated.
2. Discuss Paul as our example in overcoming a defeatist attitude.
3. Discuss why a congregation will not make greater progress than its leadership.

4. Discuss why the leadership of a congregation should plan ahead.
5. Discuss the importance of having qualified elders.
6. Discuss why many members are untrained.
7. Discuss how to overcome the problem of members who will not work.
8. Discuss the sin of neglect in the church today.

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LESSON 5

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is the fifth lesson on this subject.
2. We need to take all these lessons to heart and apply them to our lives.

I. LACK OF TRUE CONVERSION HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. Conversion means a change of heart, a change of life, a change of allegiance and a change of state.
2. This change comes about by faith, repentance, confession and baptism.
3. A converted person lives a new life. Rom. 6: 4, II Cor. 5:17; Col. 3: 8 - 10
4. Too many are in the church today upon no other basis than their parents were members before them.
    (1) We should bring up our children in the admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6: 1 - 4
    (2) This requires impartation of knowledge which produces conviction. John 16: 8

II. MURMURING, DISCONTENT AND HABITUAL FAULT-FINDING WILL HINDER CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. One of the greatest hindrances in a congregation is a group of "sore-heads" who dislike everything that is done.
2. Paul warns about this attitude. I Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14
3. Jesus warns the rash fault-finder. Matt. 7: 1 - 5

III. GOSSIP, BACKBITING AND BICKERING HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. Christians are to refrain their tongues. I Pet. 3: 10 -11
2. If there is no talebearer, strife will cease. Prov. 26: 20
3. Tale-bearing was forbidden in the Old Testament. Lev. 19:16
4. The apostle Paul warns about being idle. I Tim. 5: 11 - 13
5. We are to control our tongues. James 3: 1 -12; 1:26
6. The slanderer. Psa. 101:5; I Tim. 3:11

IV. INDIFFERENCE HINDERS CONGREGATIONAL GROWTH

1. By indifference we mean being unconcerned, lukewarm, a lack of interest.
2. Causes of indifference:
    (1) Worldliness. I John 2: 15 -17

a. Uncontrolled passion seeks fulfillment in many ways -- the modern dance, petting, fornication, social drinking, the evil tongue, immodest dress.

(2) Business cares which burden the mind. Matt. 13:22

(3) Ignorance of God's word.

3. Examine this indifferent person and see what he does:

(1) Never studies the Bible.

(2) Never feels the need of prayer.

(3) Can always find an excuse for not coming to the services.

(4) But, can always go to the show and social events.

(5) Sunday night and Wednesday night -- never present.

(6) Never visits the sick.

4. How members of the church can remove indifference:

(1) Every day let God say something to us through His word. II Tim. 2:15; I Tim. 4:13; Psa. 119: 105; 119:11

(2) Every day say something to God in prayer. I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1

(3) Every day do and say something for God.

a. Opportunity. Gal. 6:10

b. Convert sinners. James 5: 19 - 20; Matt. 28: 19 - 20

c. Work. I Cor. 15:58

TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION:

1. Discuss what true Bible conversion is.
2. Discuss why so many seem never to have truly been converted.
3. Discuss what murmuring and discontentment will do in a congregation.
4. Discuss how the habit of fault-finding will grow on an individual.
5. Discuss how the uncontrolled tongue can hinder a congregation.
6. Discuss why there is so much indifference today.
7. Discuss how to overcome indifference.
8. Discuss some other things you think need to be added to these lessons that hinder congregational growth.

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