

WHAT CONGREGATIONS NEED

It is always worthwhile to take inventory of one's life in order to detect spiritual flaws that need attention (2 Cor.13:5; Psa. 139:23-24). What's true of individuals in this regard is also true of congregations. Following are some pressing needs in today's church:

Commitment to Truth

There is nothing congregations of the Lord's church today need more than a strong commitment to the truth (Pro. 23:23). We live in a time in which many churches of Christ have abandoned truth for error and God's way for man's way.

But we must never forget that only the truth saves (John 8:32; James 1:18); only the truth purifies the soul (1 Pet. 1:22); truth must govern our worship for God to accept it (John 4:24); the truth causes the body to grow (Eph. 4:15; Acts 20:32); the church is to be the pillar and support of truth (1 Tim. 3:15); it is in the truth that we must constantly walk (2 John 4; 3 John 4).

Churches are only hurting themselves when they change their emphasis in Bible classes and sermons from the pure, unadulterated truth of the Bible to anything else. We must not, for any reason, distort or water down the message of God's word. We must be committed to truth.

Evangelistic Emphasis

As Paul reminded the elders of the Ephesian church of his activities among them, he said regarding his preaching of the gospel, "I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). In that verse lies the key to effective evangelism: proclaim all profitable teachings publicly and privately.

If a church begins to focus so much on internal matters that teaching the lost is diminished or stopped all together, then it is time for that church to reassess its priorities. The Great Commission has not been recalled (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). It is true that congregations have to address internal matters regularly, but we cannot allow those concerns to dominate our time and energy. There are more than 6 billion people on this planet and most of them need to hear the gospel of Christ. We have no time to waste.

Strong Leadership

The admonition that Haggai gave to Joshua and Zerubbabel as they led the people in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem is appropriate for elders in the church today: "Yet now be strong,

Zerubbabel, says the LORD; and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the LORD, and work; for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts" (Hag. 2:4).

Elders in the Lord's church are always in need of spiritual strength, for their position involves much "work" (1 Tim. 3:1). They face the daunting task of shepherding a congregation (Acts 20:28), which includes many unpleasant activities. If elders are not strong, wolves will come into the flock and devour the sheep (Acts 20:29-30).

It takes strength, depth and vigor to be a good example of leadership (1 Pet. 5:3), to watch out for the souls of many people (Heb. 13:17), to exhort and convict with sound doctrine (Titus 1:9), to be available for church members, to visit the sick, to lead in disciplinary matters, to encourage the weak and to warn the unruly. Shepherding a congregation is often a thankless work, but the Lord will certainly reward the diligent labor of all (1 Cor. 15:58).

Let us not cease to pray for our elders, and so conduct ourselves in a way that allows them to fulfill their responsibilities with joy. We only hurt ourselves when we do otherwise (Heb. 13:17).

Readiness to Forgive

To say that Christians can sometimes make a mess of their lives is somewhat of an understatement. There is not a child of God in existence that can accurately claim not to have sinned. To make such a claim would be to lie, and God does not look favorably on falsehood (1 John 1:8; Rev. 21:8). What, then, should our attitude be toward those that have sinned? How should we respond when a brother or sister repents of and confesses sin in his or her life?

First, let it be noted that too often the response from Christians is shameful and evil. Just like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:29-32), some Christians today cannot find it in their hearts to forgive those that have returned to the Lord. Instead of emulating the inhabitants of heaven, being joyous and happy over one who has come home (Luke 15:7, 10), they fuss and fume in the background, creating smear campaigns that would make any unscrupulous politician green with envy.

The ironic thing is that these unforgiving Christians look down their merciless noses at others, all the while expecting to go to heaven and believing that God is pleased. The truth is, "if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15). "Judgment is without mercy to the one who

has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). There is absolutely no excuse for Christians to harbor an unforgiving spirit. When congregations lack forgiveness, they lack Jesus Christ.

Brotherly Love

Closely related to the previous point is every congregation's need for brotherly affection. According to 1 John 3:10-11, one of the characteristics that distinguish children of God from children of Satan is brotherly love. Even stronger language is used in verses 14-15, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." In 1 John 2:9, the inspired apostle states that those who do not love their brethren are "in darkness until now".

When Christians do not have proper affection for each other, it may be because true conversion has never occurred. Christians who don't love each other are Christians in name only. Their religion is worthless, for it has not reached their hearts. Consider the haunting question of 1 John 4:20, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

Fewer Cynics, More Trust

In his personification of love, Paul wrote that love "believes all things" (1 Cor.13:7). Understanding and applying the meaning of that phrase would take many congregations a long way toward being what God desires them to be.

To say that love "believes all things" is not to say that the loving person is gullible. Rather, as Paul Butler put it in his book, *First Corinthians*, "...love is not innately suspicious. Love strives to ascribe the best motives to others in their actions. Love looks for the best in everyone and everything. Love takes people at their word and always hopes in their trustworthiness, as long as it can, and then mourns over those who stumble and fall" (p. 285). All congregations need to give attention to certain matters. May God grant us the wisdom to discern our present needs, and the courage to mold ourselves according to His will. Eternity hangs in the balance.

Eddie Parrish from *Eastside Edifier*

ANNIVERSARY

Ed and Verna Hanson, 11-11; 58th Congratulations!
John and Debra Gragg, 11-16.

BIRTHDAY

Allen Scott, 11-16.

ILL

Sunday: Kathleen Camp, John Cody Carter (AM), Janice and Jennifer Carter (PM), Tom Tucker.

Wednesday: Jessica Carter.

Allen Scott is in Room 420 at Olathe Medical Center and is being treated for pneumonia. Bob Adams has been having some difficulties the past couple of weeks.

Those battling cancer: Jamal Abyad, David Cole, Ledgia Campbell and Betty James. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Millie Robertson, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams resides at Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Melissa Cole was in Osage, Kansas last week. Joel Nelson was in Las Vegas on business last week.

MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING

Our monthly Men's Business Meeting will be held this Sunday, November 11 following AM worship. All men of the congregation are encouraged to attend this meeting.

SATURDAY SEMINARS

"Getting To Know Our God" is the theme of the Saturday Seminars at 39th Street in Independence, MO. November 17 is the next scheduled date. See the flyer in the foyer for full details.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 45; Sunday PM, 33; Wednesday PM, 27.

Those To Serve

November 11, 2007

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Parish

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS.....Steve Brown
SONG LEADER..... George Thomas
OPENING PRAYER Trent Thrasher
PRESIDE..... John Dodson
ASSIST..... Chris Edwards
ASSIST.....David Parish
CLOSING PRAYER..... Joel Nelson

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Jared Nelson
CLOSING PRAYER..... Jeff Nemechek
LORD'S SUPPER..... John Dodson

WEDNESDAY 14th

SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
INVITATION Ted Thrasher

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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