

Challenges for a Growing Congregation

INTRODUCTION

1. As a congregation grows, it is likely to face various challenges...
 - a. The devil would certainly love to hinder us in our work - e.g., **1 Th 2:18**
 - b. How he does this may not always be evident, as he is a great deceiver - **2 Co 11:3**

Through simple and seemingly harmless diversions, the devil can lead us astray

1. We must therefore take up the admonition to **“Hold fast...”** - **Re 3:11**
 - a. Accepting any challenges the devil might throw our way
 - b. Knowing that our efforts to be “steadfast” are not for naught - **1 Co 15:58**

[In this study we will look at some challenges that any congregation must meet to serve the Lord faithfully, but especially a growing congregation]

I. WE MUST REMEMBER WHAT OUR WORK IS

A. TO EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY (EDIFICATION)...

1. We are to provide for the spiritual growth of each member - **Ep 4:11-12**
2. This is how the body continues to grow - **Ep 4:15-16**
3. Thus we are to provoke one another to love and good works, the very reason we are to assemble together - **He 10:24-25**

-- Is each one of us doing what we can to help other Christians to grow?

B. TO SOUND FORTH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST (EVANGELISM)...

1. Like the church at Thessalonica - **1 Th 1:8**
2. Through individual and collective efforts, we must “sow the seed”
3. As our building fills, it becomes tempting to slack off, but we must either expand or swarm

(have some leave to start another congregation)

-- Is each one of us doing what we can to spread the gospel?

C. TO PROVIDE FOR NEEDY SAINTS (BENEVOLENCE)...

1. The original purpose behind the weekly collection - **1 Co 16:1-2**
2. Even if there is no need locally, there may be needy saints in other places
Is each one of us doing what we can to see that needs are being met?

[The work of the local church goes far beyond providing a place where people can simply worship from week to week. We should be preparing ourselves to work! Will we meet the challenge? Another challenge we must face...]

II. WE MUST LIVE ABOVE PETTINESS

A. EVEN GOOD CHURCHES CAN BE HINDERED BY PETTINESS...

1. Notice Paul's concern for the church at Philippi - **Ph 4:2-3**
2. When churches lose sight of their primary purpose, they are ripe for being torn apart by selfishness, gossip, and factionalism

B. WE MUST KEEP A PROPER SENSE OF PROPORTION...

1. It is disastrous if we begin to "major in minors", to blow problems all out of proportion
2. We must see the largeness and importance of our work in comparison to our own personal problems
 - a. Every church has its problems, for we are imperfect people
 - b. Remembering Paul's exhortations in **Ph 2:1-5** will certainly help

[What a sad thing it would be to have a congregation hindered by pettiness. Yet so many congregations do allow it to keep them from growing. Will we accept the challenge never to allow pettiness to so affect us? It will be easy to meet that challenge, if at the same time we meet another one...]

III. WE MUST MAINTAIN GRATITUDE FOR OUR BLESSINGS

A. WE HAVE MUCH FOR WHICH TO BE THANKFUL...

1. As individuals:
 - a. We have many physical blessings
 - b. Our families, friends, homes, health
- 2) Our freedoms, jobs
 - c. We have many spiritual blessings
- 1) Salvation in Christ, the forgiveness of sins, the peace of mind
- 2) The love of God, the strength of the Holy Spirit, the hope of heaven
- 3) As a congregation:
 - a. Free from turmoil, free to worship
 - b. Filled with love and unity
 - c. Blessed with good facilities, signs of numerical and spiritual growth
 - d. Great potential for both individual and congregational growth

B. WE SHOULD BE NOTED FOR OUR "ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE "...

1. Note how often Paul exhorted the Colossians to be thankful
 - a. Giving thanks to the Father - **Co 1:12**
 - b. Abounding with thanksgiving - **Co 2:7**
 - c. As the peace of God rules in your heart, be thankful - **Co 3:15**
 - d. Giving thanks to God - **Co 3:17**
 - e. Be vigilant in prayer with thanksgiving - **Co 4:2**
2. As individuals, and as a congregation, let us never become "unthankful"
 - a. It is a step toward depravity - **Ro 1:21**
 - b. It is a sign of perilous times - **2 Ti 3:1-5**

CONCLUSION

1. There are many other challenges that congregations may face...
 - a. Such as persecution for the cause of Christ
 - b. Or natural calamities that may devastate our community

2. But in most cases, even those challenges can be met and overcome if we...
 - a. Remember what our work is
 - b. Live above pettiness
 - c. Maintain gratitude for our blessings

With a will to do what the Lord desires of us, and with the “attitude of gratitude” lifting us above any sense of pettiness that might drag us down, let us do our part to answer the prayer of Paul:

“...to Him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ep 3:21)

Note: The main idea and several thoughts from this lesson were taken from a lesson by Gary Henry. The URL for his web site containing many excellent articles and sermon outlines is: <http://www.brasstacks.org>