

What Makes A Healthy Congregation?

Part 1

Introduction.

1. **Every congregation should desire to grow – both in numbers and spiritually.**
 - a. There have been a few congregations which really did not want to grow.
 - b. They liked their nice little group – at peace – liked their demographic – didn't want any undesirables coming in and causing problems.
 - c. Such an attitude is not what God wants – and is not characteristic of most groups.

2. **Certainly, you want the Country Club Road congregation to grow.**
 - * In number – because numbers represent souls.
 - * In spiritual strength, maturity, love, patience, knowledge, ability to sacrifice and serve.
 - * In contribution – so that you can do more – support more gospel preachers – do more good in the kingdom.

3. **And of course, all of this must be to the glory of God.**
 - a. **Matt. 5:16** – “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven.”

 - b. **Ephesians 1:10-12** – “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”

 - c. **1 Peter 2:9-10** – “But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

4. **We must realize – as badly as you and I want this church to grow, we cannot make it grow.**
 - ** Only God can make it grow.

5. **An illustration:**
 - a. I cannot make a strawberry plant, or an orange tree.

 - b. I cannot by wishing, desiring, pleading, talking, screaming, crying ... make that plant grow.

 - c. Only God can make them grow. God put life in the seed – the DNA in the seed, it help grow up to be a healthy plant.

- d. And God established the laws by which that seed will grow. Good soil, sunlight, rain.
- e. And when those conditions are met – the plant will grow.

6. And we cannot make this church grow by talking, or hoping, or desiring or praying.

- a. Just as God makes plants grow consistent with the laws of nature that He has established...
- b. ... God makes churches grow consistent with the spiritual laws that he has established.

8. So the question is not – “How can we make this church grow?”

But -- What can we do, as directed by God’s Word, to provide a *healthy atmosphere* in which *God* can cause His church to grow and prosper?”

9. The more that I have thought about this over the last few years – I believe that there are a number of factors that go into making a healthy congregation.

- a. None are the “answer” by themselves – but all are important.
- b. For example: A child needs good nutrition, sleep, exercise, love, encouragement, training, discipline, etc. to grow up physically and emotionally and spiritually.
 - 1) None of these are the answer by themselves.
 - 2) Exercise is good – but all exercise and no meals is not good.
 - 3) Good nutrition is good – but all food and no exercise is not good.

10. The same is true spiritually. A number of factors are critical to the growth and development of any local congregation:

Sound doctrine, prayer, zeal, good leadership, love, service, sacrifice, evangelistic spirit, patience, forgiving spirit, discipline.

11. This morning we begin with *healthy teaching!*

Conclusion.

- 1. A congregation can lose people and be smaller than it was formerly, and yet be stronger spiritually.**
- 2. Suppose you have a congregation of 100**
 - a. A family does not like sound teaching – preaching on morals – drinking, worldliness.
 - b. They get tired of “Hard preaching” and they leave.
 - c. Now the cong. is at 95.
- 3. Suppose there is another family – they like to gossip.**

- a. Cause trouble, slander, complain.
- b. Elders or preacher go to see them.
- c. Encourage them to repent.
- d. Leave – and two families, their friends go with them – now the church is down 80.

4. Congregation is working – encouraging others to work – preacher preaches on evangelism

- a. Brethren start an evangelistic program, radio program, or other work, too expensive.
- b. Preacher preaches on evangelism – but they want to sit and do nothing.
- c. Now the group is down to 75.

5. Church stronger at 75 or at 100?

- a. The church of 100 that has several grumblers, complainers, worldly members.
- b. Or the church of 75 that has been purged?