



Why Local Churches Falter

A STUDY OF HOW A LOCAL CHURCH DECLINES

Stage 1:

Spoken Understanding of the Truth



- The truth is taught, and it is understood by the brethren.
- The truth is...
 - *Valued* because it is *vital* to salvation – Jn. 8:31-32
 - What makes the church *distinct*

Roy Cogdill – *The New Testament Church*



“The Churches of Christ have steadily progressed in spite of ridicule and opposition until they have reached a plane of dignity and respectability in the world. They are now confronted with the danger of accepting their place among the religious bodies of the world and becoming merely ANOTHER DENOMINATION. It is quite commonly a subject of discussion that there is but little difference between the Church of Christ and other religious bodies. The purpose, prayer and aim in the preparation and development of these lessons has been to make the distinctive position occupied by the Church of Christ outstanding and easily discernible. Members, both young and old, need to know the difference between the Church and denominationalism. Indoctrination along this line is imperative if the members of the Churches of Christ are to remain “a people for God’s own possession.”

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- The truth is...
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 - What makes the church *distinct*
 - Why we evangelize – 2 Thess. 2:13

Stage 1:

ONENESS of Unity in Truth **Appreciated** – Eph. 4:1-5



- **THE** unity of the Spirit is sought and preserved – 4:1-3
- The **UNITY** of the Spirit is contrary to denominationalism
- This unity is based on the **ONENESS** of the truth – 4:4-5
 - One body – Col. 1:24; Mt. 16:18
 - One Spirit – Jn. 16:13
 - One hope – Jn. 14:16
 - One Lord – Eph. 1:20-23
 - One Faith – Jude 3
 - One baptism – Acts 2:38; 10:47; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-4
 - One acceptable worship – Jn. 4:24; Mt. 15:8-9; Col. 3:17

Spoken Understanding of the Truth

Stage 2:

Unspoken Understanding of the Truth

- The truth is still believed, but the preaching and teaching begin to change.
- The distinctive message of the truth is no longer presented...
 - Because it is not needed. Everyone has heard it and knows it
 - Because if you keep preaching it, you risk people getting bored and no longer listening.
 - Because those who once preached it come to believe “you catch more flies with honey than vinegar.”
- Weeks turn into months, which turn into years, and the fullness of truth has not been preached!

God says:

Teaching the Truth is Important

- Jesus' prayer – Jn. 17:17-21
 - Sanctification depends on the truth being preached/understood – 17:17-19
 - The unity we must have is the same as that of Jesus and the Father – 17:20-21; 14:24; 5:19
- The truth must be continually preached...
 - Even when people already know it – 2 Pet. 1:12-13
 - Even when people do not want to hear it – 2 Tim. 4:1-5.