

Three Stages Of A Congregation

People who study organizations claim that a typical organization goes through three stages in its lifetime. This is also true of a congregation unless it consistently renews its commitment to Christ and the task to which it is called. Let's look at these three stages and maybe you can evaluate where this church is:

1. The risk-taking stage -- This characterized the new congregation in its first years of existence. The members are willing to take risks. They are willing to work hard to build up the local congregation through personal evangelism. They are not afraid to ask their neighbors to study with them. They eagerly look for contacts whom they may invite to attend Bible study and worship. They are not afraid to do more than everyone thinks they can (Acts 4:18-20; 5:27-29; 8:1-4).
2. The caretaking stage -- A congregation usually enters this stage after its building is completed and paid for. Their theme song is "I Shall Not Be Moved." Their major goal is to maintain a status quo. They just want to keep what they have and lose nothing. This stage does not excite them to invite and encourage their friends to study with them or visit their meeting (Revelation 2:4-5; 3:15-17).
3. The undertaking stage -- If a church remains in the "caretaking" stage long enough, it will soon be ready for the undertaker! This kind of congregation is in a rut, which some have defined as a "grave with both ends knocked out." The last words of the church in the undertaking stage are, "But we are a sound congregation; we stand for the truth on all issues" (Revelation 3:1-3).

Where is the Loop? Who among us will say we are at the risk-taking stage? We could easily return to it. How far are we from the undertaking stage? Will you take time to think of the best interests of the cause of truth for which we stand and to which we have committed? Will you seek out contacts and invite them to come and visit with us at our assemblies?

Adapted From Lanny Smith