

# Bearing Fruit

**Introduction.** How long has it been since you drove by an abandoned church building? Do you ever wonder when the building was built? When they stopped meeting and why? Where are the people now?

All that we do revolving around evangelism glorifies God (John 15:1-8). In order to have a healthy, thriving congregation, we need to know why churches decline, and we need to correct faulty attitudes that may be preventing us from growing and properly bearing fruit.

## I. ***Why Churches Decline***

- A. Christians often do not know why their congregations decline. They become convinced that people today do not want to hear the gospel, or that the preacher is not good at seeking the lost.
- B. However, the real reasons why congregations are not growing are as follows:
  - 1. They do not seek the lost.
    - a) It takes everyone, and they may have left that love (Revelation 2:4).
    - b) There are still lots of people who are scattered and lost (Matthew 9:36-38).
  - 2. They do not convert their children.
    - a) If we rooted evil out of our children like we do weeds out of our yards and gardens, there would be far fewer problems (Deuteronomy 4:9; Job 1:5).
    - b) The positive effects of reading to and studying with your children will pay off in a lifetime of faithfulness for them and joy and happiness for you (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).
  - 3. They bite and devour each other.
    - a) So many churches have this problem (Galatians 5:13-15).
    - b) Brethren would do well to have more love and consideration (1 Peter 1:22; 3:8).

## II. ***Attitudes Congregations Face***

- A. "We do not need to grow; we are big enough already."
  - 1. When did our likes become the standard?
  - 2. Our standard has to be the same as God's, which is to save all men (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
- B. "I cannot know and feel close to everyone at church."
  - 1. In Acts 2:41, do you think everyone knew each other on a first name basis?
  - 2. There is no rule that we know everyone; we have to be united in truth and love (2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:15; 2 John 3).

- C. "Big congregations are unfriendly and impersonal."
  - 1. There were about 5,000 believers in Acts 4:4. However, they were of "one heart and of one soul" in 4:32.
  - 2. Small congregations can be just as cold and friendly as large ones. The difference is made in people who really care about other people.
- D. "Too many people make the church feel crowded."
  - 1. Nothing is ever said about the crowds of Acts 2:41 or 4:4 being "too many".
  - 2. Is someone's salvation more important than our comfort or feelings?
- E. "Good enough is good enough."
  - 1. Whatever we do needs to be done in excellence (Psalm 108:1).
  - 2. Should our buildings be worse than our homes (Haggai 1:4, 9)?
- F. "No matter what we do, we can never win the lost."
  - 1. Congregations across the country are proving this wrong. They are growing and enlarging their facilities.
  - 2. If we only think about all the people we know who could be taught, then we realize the fields are "white unto harvest" (John 4:34-42).
- G. "Any church that grows must be headed toward liberalism."
  - 1. This might be true but not necessarily. Many churches fall to the temptation to please crowds to become large (Galatians 1:10).
  - 2. As a church becomes larger, it has to stand for the truth and try to pull its members up through grounding them in the truth rather than compromise (1 Timothy 1:3-4).

**Conclusion.** We should never forget our mission because everything we do to spread the gospel glorifies God (John 15:8). The early church walked in the fear of the Lord and they multiplied (Acts 9:31). Hopefully, your second-greatest desire, aside from being saved yourself from the dominion of sin, is to save someone else. A big part of saving someone else is making sure that you do not have any poor attitudes toward growth. If you are not a Christian, you need to become one and join us in this worthy work for the Lord.

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