

MAKING A BETTER CONGREGATION

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Every church, no matter how "good", can always improve
- B. The place to begin is with each individual
 - 1. Shortcomings of churches in Revelation could not be overcome unless individuals in each made changes Rev 1:11- 3:22
 - 2. The same is still true today

DISCUSSION:

I. REMIND OURSELVES DAILY ONLY WAY TO IMPROVE THIS GROUP IS TO BEGIN WITH SELF

- A. Paul's sense of personal responsibility 1Tim 1:12-16
- B. Though he was an apostle, he kept improving himself 1Cor 9:27, Phil 3:12-14
- C. Illustration: "Start With Myself First"

II. REMIND SELF DAILY - YOU'RE NOT PERFECT

- A. Recognize own shortcomings Matt 7:3-5, Lk 18:10-14, Gal 6:1
- B. Though not perfect, God can still use me 2Cor 4:7;
- C. Illustration: Some years ago, a party of Americans were leaving Cairo, Egypt, on a journey across the desert and bought vessels in which to carry water. Each one chose the kind of vessel that pleased him. One found jars of brass whose fine designs attracted him. Another purchased porcelain vessels of rare beauty. A third, however, took some plain earthenware bottles. The way across the desert was long and wearisome. The heat was intense. Every drop of water was of value. The brass vessels heated; the water became impure, unfit to drink. The costly porcelain jars cracked in the heat and the water was lost. But the plain earthenware bottles kept the water pure and fresh to the journey's end.
- D. I may be just an old clay jar but God can use me 1Cor 12:12-27

III. LOOK FOR AND POINT OUT GOOD QUALITIES IN OTHERS

- A. Pessimism & cynicism abound. Look for good! Phil 4:8
 - 1. Surely, in everyone something good to commend
 - 2. Then few criticisms you offer will be better accepted.
- B. When we must criticize, then pray for them first 2Thes 1:11-12 It may not have positive effect, but will do wonders for you!
- C. Admonish gently Matt 7:2, Gal 6:1
 - 1. Story of someone who bought a used fish tank for \$5. Cleaned it with soap & killed the fish!

- 2. In efforts to clean up lives of others we sometimes use "killer soaps" -- condemnation, criticism, and nagging. Let us strive to maintain humility and gentleness in our efforts to restore others.

D. Accept graciously if you're on the receiving end of criticism Col 3:13-14

- 1. Ask is it true? Am I guilty of accusation?
- 2. Ask what's person's motive?
- 3. Ask will I be a better person if I take this criticism?

V. CHOOSE STRONG, GODLY MEMBERS AS EXAMPLE

- A. Some choose weakest, worldliest, most hypocritical to be example just because they are closer friends & end up in same hypocrisy Psalm 37:37-38, 101:6-7
- B. In most churches is someone to follow 1Cor 4:16; 11:1
- C. BE an example to someone else. 1Tim 4:12
- D. "We talk a good deal about religion, but we need to stop long enough to let our feet catch up with our mouths!"

VI. DON'T BLAME SOMEONE ELSE FOR FAILURES

- A. Every Christian can be faithful despite bad examples and attitudes around them
- B. Tho not everyone will be pillar of godliness, YOU can be!
- C. Either stand or fall on your own Gal 6:4-5, 2Cor 5:10
- D. When work neglected, instead of complaining, and/or blaming others, roll up your sleeves and get busy.
 - 1. Sometimes suffer from "too many chiefs" syndrome.
 - 2. Jesus did not come to be served Matt 20:28
 - 3. No one even has to know you did it! Matt 6:1-2
 - 4. Impressing others has no place in a Christian.

VII. INCREASE LOVE FOR MEMBERS OF CHURCH

- A. The mark by which we'll be known Jhn 13:35
- B. We're household of God - behave like a family!
 - 1. Older treat younger with consideration.
 - 2. Younger ones treat the older with respect.
 - 3. Expect to get back what you give!

CONCLUSION:

- A. Realize that all churches have problems, only two out of seven churches of Asia had no reproof given them
- B. Some more than others but all do nonetheless.
- C. The question to ask is "am I part of the problem or part of the solution?" 2Cor 13:11

(by Zeke Flores revised by jlh)