

### **HOW CAN WE HELP STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION?**

November 8, 2011

Sometimes we come across a congregation of the Lord's people who are happy to just simply exist. Recall the church at Laodicea, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-16). The brethren at that location were not prepared to grow in spirit and number. Anytime this is the case, even when conversions occur, the new Christian is in great danger of falling away. Both individually and collectively we must prepare to do what we can do to help strengthen the local congregation.

As a congregation, we must offer an **Enthusiastic** worship service. This is not to mean one that has been modernized in order to fit man's view of what worship should be, but it must still be enthusiastic. When a visitor comes for the first time, do they witness a group that appears as if they would rather be anywhere else other than the assembly? Do we mumble more than we sing? Do we concentrate more on balancing our check books than on the prayer being said? We have heard it said, "You only have one chance at a first impression." This holds true for a first time visitor to the assembly.

We should always be on the lookout for new faces in the crowd and make a point for them to enjoy our friendliness, warmth, love, and our enthusiasm as followers of God. New converts rely heavily on the spiritual nourishment they gain from each worship service. We often quote Hebrews 10:25 in regard to attendance and rightly so, but notice verses 24 and 25. The Hebrews writer explains the importance of our coming together for worship, which is to provoke each other to love and good works! If we are absent we cannot show our love or assist in good works. New converts as well as visitors notice our absences.

As a congregation, we must offer **Encouragement**. There may be a member on the verge of falling away and a kind word or deed may be all that is needed to keep that from happening. One may feel left out of the group and not feel a part of the family. New Christians need special attention from the mature members of the fold. They need to feel like they are loved and are in the thoughts of others. People face trials and tribulation in this life and often have no one to turn to outside of their church family. Paul wrote, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Rom. 15:1-3). Next week we will notice some individual things we can do to help strengthen the local congregation.