

Pleasant View Proclaimer

Pleasant View church of Christ

Why Are Churches of Christ Shrinking?

December 1, 2013

Issue 139

Some congregations of our Lord's church are growing and thriving; there is no question about it. Some congregations, however, are shrinking. The membership numbers in churches of Christ nationwide have either been stagnant or falling over the past 25-30 years. Since churches of Christ are loosely connected, independent bodies, it is nearly impossible to identify with certainty why this decline is happening, even though many theories have been proposed.

Here are a few of my ideas on the issue, based on my own observations and experiences:

1.) *Demographic changes in America have affected rural congregations.* Many churches of Christ were established within a 50-year span between 1875 and 1925. Those congregations met in the center of town. But over the last 90 years, the town moved, and the Christians moved with it, leaving their home congregations behind.

2.) *The people in the pew have stopped evangelizing.* In the early part of the 20th century—and in the early part of the 1st century—Christians felt obligated to convert the lost. Evangelism was not restricted to the preacher. Today, many Christians are content to let the “professionals” do

the teaching while wondering why the baptismal isn't being used.

3.) *Members of the church are not committed to marrying members of the church.* Years ago, it was a common joke that women went to Christian colleges in order to get their “MRS.” degree. Yes, they studied various subjects, but the ultimate goal was to meet and marry a Christian man who shared their beliefs. I haven't heard that joke in a long time. Many Christian mothers attend church without their husbands because their husband is not a Christian. And vice versa.

(continued on back)

Items of Note:

- There are boxes in the back corner of the auditorium for Christmas cards. Just put the cards into an envelope and put them into the person's folder based on first letter of last name. Then check to see if you received any!
- Please pray for Randy Gupton, John Hayes, Jessica Humston, Mildred Walker, Addie Famer, Jay Newell and all those who are traveling this weekend.

A.M. Sermon: “Thankful”

Nursing Home Worship and Gift Bag Distribution Today at 2:30

THOSE WHO WILL SERVE THE CONGREGATION

Sunday School

Read: J. Walker

Pray: JL Shelton

Morning Worship

Wait on the Table: Reed

Serve: Demonbreum, Gupton, M. Newell

Pray: E. Walker

Pleasant View church of Christ
2500 Highway 49 East
P.O. Box 189
Pleasant View, TN 37146

Sunday School: 9:30
A.M. Worship: 10:30
P.M. Worship: 6:00
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 pm
Phone: 924-9714

Matthew 6:19
“Do not store up for
yourselves treasures on
earth, where moth and rust
destroy, and where thieves
break in and steal.”

“No one, by swearing, makes themselves an ounce more honest; any more than a man makes himself wealthy by counting his gold. Oaths may make a liar a liar yet again, having lied about the oath as well. But it cannot alter the worth of an honest man’s word.”

Jake Yaniak

“A graceful refusal is better than a lengthy promise.”

Anonymous

Why Are Churches of Christ Shrinking? (Con’t)

(continued from front)

How can we expect the church to grow when our own families are divided in their faith?

4.) *More teaching does not always solve the problem.* Teaching is vital in the church. Faith is formed from teaching the word of Christ. But people do not usually leave a church for lack of a proper class or lectureship. It’s easy to say, “People are leaving. We need a good sermon on _____.” It’s harder to personally address the problem, but that is often what is needed the most.

5.) *It’s easy to leave strangers. It’s harder to leave a family.* If churches do not

cultivate meaningful relationships among the members, it will be easy for a member to abandon the congregation at the first sign of trouble. It’s a trite statement, but it’s eternally true: “People don’t care how much you know (or what you know) until they know how much you care.”

6.) *Selfishness.* Each generation since World War II has gotten more selfish than the one before it. People look at churches and ask, “What are you going to do for me? Will you entertain me? Will you serve me? Will you address any and every complaint that I have?” That attitude is the exact opposite of the attitude of first century Christians. Those disci-

ples were focused on how to teach the lost and encourage the saints.

7.) *Cruise control.* Some churches think that attendance and enthusiasm and service will continue forever. It will as long as each member continues to progress in all three areas. But if a church rests on the successes of the past, it will slowly decline.

By the grace and blessings of God, Pleasant View will continue to grow and prosper, and by doing so, be a beacon of hope for discouraged churches.

James Hayes
