

# The Bulletin

## Meeks St. Church of Christ

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### ***“Crucial Periods in Congregational Development”***

By Mark White

A local church must make plans for its future. It must develop an idea of what direction it wishes to go. If not, a terrible fate awaits them. Vision and foresight serve a church well. If a congregation just takes what comes along and is haphazard concerning plans for its spiritual growth and development, nothing good will result.

If the Lord wills, the future will come. What we do at various stages of our existence will make a difference in what happens in the future. There are certain crucial periods in a church's life which will either cause the local congregation to be better, or be left for the worst.

What are some of these crucial times? The beginning of the church. How a particular church got started will often determine where it ends up. Did it result from a “swarm” of Christians from various existing churches coming together to form a new congregation in a needed area of town? Did it have the blessings of the elderships from those churches? Or, did the church begin as a faction?

If a church begins because of disgruntled people with ill-will in their hearts, it will likely attract people with those same negative dispositions. If a church begins sinfully, as a result of carnal division, it does not bode well for the group. If a church forms as a result of devotion to truth and maintains fidelity to the Lord's pattern, good can come of it. But if a church begins as a result of a trivial fuss among brethren, that church is likely headed for trouble.

The selection of leaders. So critical is this decision that the Holy Spirit gave instructions regarding the qualifications of elders, preachers and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Tim. 2:24-26). A church is determining its destiny when it selects its shepherds. The congregation will either be stronger or weaker dependent on who these men are. Some elders have no vision for the church beyond who will lead singing or prayers in next month's assemblies. This is not fit leadership for the people of God. Elders must prayerfully plan for the future of the church, including its leadership after they are gone. Decisions made today will have great impact on souls years into the future. The kind of preaching and teaching a church receives is determined by what the elders see the church needs.

Leadership is crucial. There must be vision beyond just meeting the immediate, pressing needs of the church. Deacons must be men selected for the service they can render, rather than for political reasons. If deacons are mere figureheads, given their position to placate certain families who feel they should be given a “title”, the church takes a detour from which it may never recover. Good, calm, steady leaders and servants are a necessity for a church going in the right direction. A congregation rarely rises above the level of its leadership.

The treatment of public sin. How will the church deal with unrepentant public sin? While there is scriptural pattern and mandate for discipline which might even result in a withdrawal of fellowship, some congregations are very good at observing the “passover” on these directives from the Lord. Every church is sooner or later confronted with whether they will practice discipline within its fellowship or not. Many Christians see no reason to practice discipline, having decided that it will not work anyway. Others would just rather not be bothered with it.



Aside from displeasing God, a church which decides it will not publicly deal with public sin is destined for trouble. It may grow numerically as it attracts worldly Christians who wish to hide from their spiritual responsibilities to live morally and uprightly. But this is a crucial time in the development of a congregation. What would have happened in the Jerusalem church if Ananias and Sapphira had been allowed to continue their lying? (Acts 5:1- 11) Would it not have brought the same result as at Corinth? There, the brethren became “puffed up” and did not mourn over a member who had taken his father’s wife! (I Cor. 5:1-13) A church ignoring sin may be a popular congregation with large numbers. However, this “strength” could be the result of their disobedience to God concerning church discipline. Their evangelistic outlook and emphasis.

The lifeblood of a congregation is its evangelistic interest. We are saved to save others. The church is a lighthouse (Phil. 2:15-16). The church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15). Some congregations are content to be a weekly worship place and nothing else. A local church meets for worship if it pleases God, to be sure, but a church must also seek opportunities to teach others. Will the church’s resources be used for preaching and teaching the Gospel? Will the church see the lost souls living within the shadow of its meeting place? Will Gospel preachers be supported to do their work? Any congregation which does not emphasize evangelism is signing its own death warrant. Both the present and the future of a church depends on evangelism. Great congregations have always been evangelistic at home and beyond their borders, to the extent of their ability.

In our time, some churches sealed their fate when they chose to abandon a spiritual focus for the “social gospel” and church-sponsored recreation instead of evangelism and spiritual growth. These items are not the only crucial choices a congregation faces in its development. However, these matters are chief determining factors of the strength and stability of a local church. Each of us plays a part in the kind of congregation we are both today and tomorrow.

(From the bulletin of the Cy-Fair Church of Christ in Cypress, TX.)

**News and Notes:** Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby’s Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, and Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor,, Gary Doles, Joe Felks, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Melissa and Star (Miss Betty’s oldest daughter and granddaughter in law).  
Danny Cottrell got a good report last week!

**Those Who Serve:**

|  |                                     |
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| <b>Announcements:</b>                          | Paul Busby                          |
| <b>Opening Prayer &amp; Scripture Reading:</b> | J D Griffin<br><i>Luke 14:27-33</i> |
| <b>Song Leader:</b>                            | Lee Busby                           |
| <b>Lord’s Supper:</b>                          | Russell Briggs                      |
| <b>Preaching:</b>                              | Brian Meade                         |
| <b>Sermon:</b>                                 | <i>“I Surrender All”</i>            |
| <b>Closing Prayer:</b>                         | Tim Harris Jr                       |

# ***“I Surrender All”***

Introduction: **Song by Judson Van DeVenter** (published in 1896).

He struggled with the choice of developing his talents as an artist or going into full-time evangelistic work. After five years, he finally surrendered all....

## **I. Does Jesus Ask Us To Surrender All?**

**A. Luke 14:25-33.**

**B. Luke 9:57-62.**

**C. What does it take to surrender all?**

1. Love for God- **Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-30.**
2. Willingness to Surrender.
3. Action On Our Part.

## **II. What Do We Surrender To Jesus?**

**A. Our Past Sinful Conduct- 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Acts 19:18-20; 1 Thess. 1:9.**

**B. Our Time & Convenience- Ephesians 5:15-16; Luke 9:23-24.**

**C. Our Friendships & Popularity With The World- James 4:4; 1 Peter 4:3-4.**

**D. Our Family That Hinders Us- Matthew 10:34-37.**

**E. Our False Religion- Matthew 15:9; Matthew 23; Philippians 3:4-8.**

**F. Our Possessions- Matthew 19:20-22; Hebrews 10:34.**

## **III. Why Surrender All?**

**A, To Be A Fruitful & Effective Servant In God’s Kingdom- John 15:1-8.**

**B. To Help The Church Grow in Number & Spiritually- 2 Peter 3:18.**

**C. To Go To Heaven! Matthew 19:27-29.**

— How Moses Made His Choice to Surrender All! **Hebrews 11:24-26.**

## **IV. What Do We Do After We Surrender All?**

**A. We must replace what is surrendered with the new passion in life.**

— **Luke 11:24-25.**

— If we don’t, we may not have something to live for.

— Service & Work in God’s Kingdom should be our life!

— **Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 15:58.**

Conclusion: **Matthew 13:44-46.**

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