

Preachers' Pen Points

The Turn-Around from Decline to Growth A Committed Core



During a period of decline many people will often lose their commitment to a congregation and seek the benefits of another thriving church. However, if a congregation is to survive a decline, there must be a core group who have the heart to overcome discouragement and the hurt of loss and work hard to save the congregation they love!

The Need for a Committed Core

Rebuilding a congregation is not a task for spiritual superstars. Though turn-around depends upon visionary leadership, it cannot be achieved solely by the effort of leaders who have a vision. There must be a committed core of members if the church is to grow (1 Cor. 12:12ff; Eph. 4:16). The committed core will give their support to the leadership and become the team that spearheads the movement in a new direction. They will not be satisfied to continue "business as usual". They will be ready to support loving leaders who demonstrate a willingness to sacrifice for others and provide training to others (Cf. Neh. 2:18).

How a Committed Core Will Help

The truth is, the rebuilding of a congregation is accomplished by the efforts of the core group. There are many ways in which they can make a rebuilding attempt successful.

- When the leadership suggests a plan of action, they will be ready with their time and resources to put the plan into action.
- The core group will accept training, being ready to move to the next level in their own spiritual growth so as to become more useful to the

cause (2 Pet. 3:18).

- Once the core is ignited by the vision of a better church, they will affect others with their zeal and the church will gain needed momentum.
- The core group will generate hope as they talk optimistically of the future and look for ways to be encouraging to their fellow team members.

What Can God Do with a Few People?

Sometimes people may say, when the church is small, do we have enough people to do great things for God? We only have to look at the history of the church to answer that question. Jesus chose twelve men to serve as the core from which to build the great cause that carries His name (Jn. 20:21)!

In many ways the accomplishment of great things from a small beginning is God's trademark (Mt. 13:31-32). God asked the Jews during a particularly discouraging time, "Who has despised the day of small things?" (Zech. 4:10) He chose to use Gideon and 300 warriors rather than the 32,000 available for the battle! (Jud. 7:2-7)

By so doing, He makes manifest that success is to be attributed to His power rather than our efforts (2 Cor. 4:7). In fact, the small band of disciples who work for God will come to appreciate how much they have depended upon Him for success rather than themselves and will, because of it, give Him all the glory for the good accomplished. And isn't that really what it's all about? (Eph. 3:20-21) Are you willing to let God use you to make a difference?

—Johnny Felker