

HOW TO SOLVE CHURCH PROBLEMS

Int.

1. Aim: To show the causes and Bible cures for problems that will arise in the congregation.
2. The church in the first century had some problems
 - a. Acts 6 - problem with the widows - they were being slighted and neglected. If this problem had not been solved then the church would have had serious problems
 - b. 1 Cor. 5 - fornication - put away that wicked person
3. Churches are composed of human beings - sometimes there will be problems because we are not perfect - conflicts and problems are going to come to every congregation.
4. When problems arise they must be solved - Ps. 133:1
 - a. The Bible has the answer to every problem
 - b. 2 Pet. 1:3 - all things that pertain unto life and godliness
 - c. Rom. 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
5. We will notice some causes of church problems and the solution that the Bible gives

Discussion

I. IGNORANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD

- A. Difficult situations arise because of ignorance of the Bible
 1. A lack of knowledge of the word of God may cause a person to be contentious about a Bible principle.
 2. He misunderstands or misapplies
 3. Ignorance of our ignorance is our deadliest enemy

B. Solution

1. Teach the congregation the Bible - 2 Tim. 2:15
2. An informed membership is the best way to avoid church problems - Rom. 1:16-17
3. That's the reason for teaching our children - 2 Tim. 3:15
4. Ignorance of God's way leads us to establish a way of our own - Rom. 10:1-3

C. An Example

1. New Convert - wants us to accept his friend without baptism
2. Problem - Solution - Teach him and his friend
3. Must be in Christ to be saved - Gal. 3:27 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

II. FORCING ONE'S OPINION UPON OTHERS

A. Must understand that there is a difference between matters of faith and matters of human opinion

1. Matters of faith are backed by authority from God. Rom. 10:17
2. Human opinion originates in the human mind
3. One member or a few members who try to force their opinion on all other members can create many unpleasant situations

B. Solution

1. Faith comes by God's word Rom. 10:17
2. Opinion comes by human minds
 - a. Acts 26:9 "I verily thought with myself..."
 - b. II Kings 5:11 NAAMAN said: "Behold, I thought..."

3. Doctrinal differences are very serious. But more problems come about matters of opinion.
 - a. Some want to quarrel and argue and fuss over their opinion
 - b. A few are looking for a fight !!!
4. An example from Paul over opinion
 - a. Acts 15:36-41 Paul and Barnabas disagreed over whether to take John Mark on the second journey
 - b. Paul did not want to because John Mark had left them on the first journey
 - c. There is no indication of any quarreling and fussing. But they did part company. Barnabas took John Mark and Paul chose Silas as his companion.
 - d. But years later Paul told the church in Colosse to welcome John Mark - Col. 4:10 "...if he come unto you, receive him."
5. We may sometimes have differences of opinion about things
 - a. That does not mean we are to get mad at one another and fuss and quarrel
 - b. Conflicts or disagreements do not mean that we are to quit the church or to try to split the church.
 - c. 1 Cor. 14:33 "For God is not [the author] of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."
6. In matters of faith = unity
In matters of opinion = liberty
In all things love

III. HOLDING TO TRADITIONS OF MEN

- A. Recognize there is a difference between command and tradition
- B. Solution
 - 1. Matt. 15:1-9
 - a. V. 6. "And honour not his father or his mother, [he shall be free]. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."
 - b. Declare part of the estate that was to be used to care for parents as a gift to God. Therefore could not use it for parents.
 - c. This tradition was observed over the laws of God and that was wrong.
 - 2. Col. 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
- C. Example of a problem of tradition
 - 1. Traditions are often the cause of problems
 - 2. Some feel that any change in the order of worship or the time of assemblies is wrong
 - 3. To change traditions is a matter of opinion
 - a. Practice of singing 2 songs - prayer - 1 song - sermon - is a tradition
 - b. To meet at 9:00 instead of 9:30 or 10:00 on Sunday morning is a matter of tradition
 - (1) One woman objected when the time was changed.
 - (2) She felt that there was some scripture or else her father and grandfather and others would not have met at that hour! It was just a tradition

IV. SELFISHNESS

A. Selfishness will disturb a congregation

1. One who has a strong selfish desire can disturb the peace and unity of a congregation
2. Sometimes it is difficult to forget self in order to do right.
3. Some people have in years gone by resorted to sneaky, underhanded methods that is like a form of dirty politics.
4. Christians must learn to forget self for the good of others, the progress of Christ's cause, and the salvation of souls.

B. Solution

1. Matt. 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."
2. Phil 2:3
 - a. (KJS) "[Let] nothing [be done] through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."
 - b. (NKJV) "[Let] nothing [be] [done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."
 - c. Do not do anything motivated by selfish ambition or vain conceit.
 - d. But let all actions be done out of a spirit of humility.
 - e. The attitude that causes contention and strife is the opposite of humility !

C. Example - Learn to forget self for the good of others.

V. HOBBYISM

A. Hobby

1. Defined as an engrossing topic, plan, etc., to which one constantly reverts." Web.
2. This hobby may be truth or error
 - a. Most hobby riders are riding an error
 - b. Possible to make a hobby of truth by "Riding" it to the neglect of other truths
3. One who has a "Hobby" of some truth may defeat the very purpose he had in mind
 - a. May build prejudice in hearts of those he wants to teach
 - b. He may be guilty of wrong by becoming unbalanced in his attitude toward the word of God.

B. Solution

1. 2 Tim. 4:5 ASV "But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry."
 - a. Sober = a sound mind - self controlled
 - b. Wise = sound judgment
2. II Tim. 2:23-24 "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes."

VI. DESIRE FOR PRE-EMINENCE

- A. Common weakness of man is his love of power
 1. Give him a little and he wants more. More he gets the more power he wants
 2. If preachers, song leaders, elders, deacons or teachers begin to think of their position from the standpoint of power and authority, then they are dangerous to the cause of Christ.

- B. Solution
 1. Christ should have preeminence in all things
 2. Col. 1:18 "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all [things] he might have the preeminence."
 3. Preeminence = to be first in rank or influence - Christ is to be first

- C. An Example is Diotrephes who desired preeminence
 - a. III John 9-11 "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth [them] out of the church. 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."
 - b. Diotrephes wanted to be first - he refused to acknowledge John's authority as an apostle.
 - c. He was jealous of John and his position and standing
 - d. He wanted the attention - he was a problem.

2. Rom. 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think [of himself] more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."
 - a. Not to think too highly of self
 - b. Think soberly

VII. DESIRE FOR POPULARITY

- A. Problems arise with a desire to please our friends outside the church
 1. Lower the standard to be popular
 2. Problems arise when brethren introduce unscriptural practices into the work and worship of the church in order to make the church more popular with the world.
 3. Desire for popularity is what causes some Christians to engage in social drinking and dancing.
 4. Desire to please will tolerate sin !
- B. Solution
 1. A Christian is never justified in doing wrong to please men !
 2. Acts 5:29 - "Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."
 3. Acts 4:19 "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."
 4. Gal. 1:10 "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

C. Example

1. Recognize that desire for popularity causes problems
2. 1 Sam. 15:24 - Saul disobeyed to please the people "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."
3. Acts 24:26-27 - Felix left Paul in bonds to show the Jews a favor - "He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

VIII. ENVY AND JEALOUSY

A. Jealousy causes problems

1. Definition - "Jealous" - suspiciously watchful, distrustful, suspicious.
2. Evil suspicion and foolish distrust can creep into the hearts of Christians who are serving in any capacity
3. A Jealous person magnifies every little thing and takes everything as an insult and makes himself unhappy when no real cause exists

B. Solution

1. Prov. 14:30 "A sound heart [is] the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones."

2. Rom. 12:9-10 “[Let] love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 [Be] kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;”
3. Gal. 5:13-16 - Love thy neighbor as thyself

IX. OBSTINATE

A. An obstinate person is:

1. Stubborn, unyielding, refuses to listen to reason
2. Many times forms his opinion on spur of the moment, and he will never change his opinion.
3. If he learns that others will give in to him, he will become more determined than ever to have his way.
4. This obstinate disposition indicates: ignorance, selfishness, immaturity

B. Solution

1. Matt. 5:3 “Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
2. 1 Pet. 5:5-6 “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all [of you] be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”

C. Example - wants his/her own way regardless of the consequences

X. BUSY BODIES

A. Meddles cause problems

1. They become so interested in meddling with the affairs of others that they neglect their own affairs
2. Most meddlers are also gossipers
3. The real motive back of most meddling is to have news to spread in gossip
4. The meddler thinks more of himself than he does others, but he tries to think more for others than he does for himself
5. Meddlers can split a church and in so doing may lose their soul and cause others to be lost

B. Solution

1. 1 Pet. 4:15 "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or [as] a thief, or [as] an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."
2. 1 Thes. 4:11 "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;"
3. 2 Thes. 3:11 "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies."

C. Example - telling others how to manage their personal matters.

Conclusion

1. These are a few of the causes of church problems and the solution suggested from the Bible.
2. Variety of problems
 - a. Sometimes involves 1 person - Other times it may involve 2 or more
 - b. Sometimes a problem on physical material matters, - building, parking, lot, carpet color of paint etc.
 - c. Spiritual problems
 - i. Worldliness
 - ii. How to do certain activities of the church
3. Essentials to solving any church problem
 - a. Avoid an unwise course
 - i. Undue publicity / Fussing
 - ii. Gossip / Anger
 - iii. Hasty action
 - b. Follow a wise course
 - i. Make sure of the facts / Approach the matter without prejudice
 - ii. Treat each individual with sympathetic understanding - Gal. 6:1
 - iii. Keep humble / Be patient and practice the golden rule
 - iv. Always put the good of the church and the souls of men first
4. Rom. 12:18 "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."
 (NKJV) " If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."

5. The early church in Acts 6 resolved their problem
 - a. The apostles listened to the complaint
 - b. They assembled the entire group and explained the roles they and the group would play in resolving the issues. They set the ground rules for solving the problem
 - c. They made the complainers a part of the solution by allowing them to select from their group those to be responsible for taking appropriate actions.
 - d. In Acts 6:5 we read: "And the saying pleased the whole multitude:..." They selected the seven men - and they were given the responsibility of distributing the food to those widows in need.
 - e. Then we notice the results in Acts 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

6. Matt. 5:9 "Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Sources consulted

1. "How to Solve Church Problems" by John D. Cox - published by 20th Century Christian, Nashville, Tenn. 1967
 2. Carolina Christian Vol. 36 No. 9 Sept. 1994 "Resolving Church Conflict"
 3. Articles in File "Church Problems"
-