

Autopsy of a Deceased Church

Bible Study Notes

1. If your Church was given a "physical exam" today, what do you think the doctor's diagnosis would be: healthy, slightly sick, very sick, or dying? why?

-The symptoms or signs of a church that is sick include:

a. Longing for the good old days (when members start talking about how the best days of the church were in the past (page 87)).

-Why do members think the best days were in the past? What is wrong with the present? How have things changed? What do members miss about the past?

b. When membership and attendance at worship begin to decline and decrease, it's a sign of a dying church.

- Why do members stop coming? What do we do when members stop coming to worship and other activities? What can we do to keep members interested?

c. The various programs and ministries are focused on those within the congregation and there is little or no outreach.

- As the local community changes, should the church be ready to reach out to newcomers to the neighborhood?
- What outreach programs do we have right now that are for those in the community? Are there local food banks to contribute to? Retirement villages to visit? Homeless shelters?

d. Do the various programs and ministries have a clear purpose?

- What are the programs and ministries?
- Why do they exist? Who is the target population?
- What impact are they making?

2. Why do many church members in dying churches refuse to see the decline in the health of the Church?

a. Many members in dying churches refuse to see the decline in the health of the church because they don't want to acknowledge that times and the community are changing;

- b. They are satisfied with the way things are?**
- c. They are not ready to welcome new people;**
- d. They don't want to reach out to the community**

3. Explain how Churches can die in the context of Matthew 16:18, which says Hades will not prevail.

a. Matthew 16:18 says, "On this rock I will build my church, and the forces of hades will not overpower it."

- The Rock Jesus talked about was the Confession of faith Peter gave. When Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

-There are those who say Peter was the rock. But in the next chapter, Jesus called Peter "Satan."

- As long as the church confesses and believes in Jesus as the Christ, Lord of all, and the Son of God, it will be on solid foundation.

b. What does it mean to declare Jesus is the Christ (The Messiah, the Anointed One, The King and Lord)?

-Doesn't it mean everything the Church does must be to glorify God? It means "I surrender all" and I place everything in God's hands. This also means being obedient to the Great Commission and the mission of Christ. It means "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

- How can we demonstrate all these things in our personal lives and in the life of the church? Our personal faith as social implications.