

The Church of Your Choice

What do you want this church to be like? How do you want us to be thought of in the community? What impression do you want our visitors to leave with after coming our way? Most importantly, what does God think of us, and how will our congregation be judged eternally? As you think about your answers, let your imagination soar for a moment – friendliest church, most inspiring worship assembly, best evangelistic emphasis, most compassionate benevolence program, most peaceful church, best taught Bible school, strongest visitation program. Most loving fellowship, best youth program, most generous, etc. Do you realize **the choice is yours?**

Of course, I'm not talking about what doctrine we will believe, practice, or teach. That's already been decided for us by Christ. If we want to be the Lord's church, then obviously we must do what the Lord said, or we are not His church. There is no getting around that truth, no matter what our tolerant postmodern society may say. What I am talking about is how we apply the teachings of the New Testament. That's what really determines what this congregation will be like, and that decision is up to the membership. Allow me to elaborate.

Who decides what the attendance will be at any given assembly? The members decide! Who decides how much will be spent on evangelism? Someone might say, "Well, the elders decide that." Wrong! The elders may decide where the money will go, but the members decide how much will be spent, because elders can't spend what the members won't give. What about the atmosphere of our assemblies, who decides what it will be? The members, of course! You can't have a friendly church without friendly members. You can't have a loving church without loving members. You can't have enthusiastic worship in spirit and truth without zealous and dedicated members. You can't have peace in the Lord's church, unless you have brethren who are humble peacemakers.

So, who decides whether we are a growing, stagnant, or dying church? You know the answer: it's the members! Oh yes, leadership plays a major role. The Bible teaches (as well as common sense) that the church cannot outgrow its leadership. In other words you can't have a growing church with a stagnant or dead leadership. Generally speaking, the members will not go where the leaders will not lead. Many churches are stagnant, dying, or dead, because their leaders offer little or no example of real leadership for the members to follow.

Ultimately, though, it falls on the membership to decide whether the church grows, dies, or maintains the status quo (which is really just a nice way of saying "remains stagnant"). In the case of stagnant leadership, faithful members will kindly exhort and encourage the leaders to boldly dream, challenge, and lead by example. In the case of dynamic, on fire leadership, though, if they don't have zealous members who are willing to follow their lead by involving themselves in the work, then the battle is lost. The simple truth is that **it takes great leaders and great followers to build a great church!**

Donald