

Four Classes of Church Persons (Introduction)

*"Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody expects of you. Never excuse yourself."*¹

1Th 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

The church is not a place for perfect people. It's a hospital for people who know they're ill. We don't claim for a moment that the church is perfect. In fact, we would eagerly claim that it is not. It is not homogenous (the quality or state of being all the same or all of the same kind).

The process of church growth happens through;

- the elimination of disobedience, (1 Sam. 12:13-15; 2 Cor.10:5-6; Matt. 21:1-6, 26:17-19; Heb. 2:1-3)
- the elimination of inequity, and (Matt. 5:45, 19:27-20:1-16; Job 34:18-19; Acts 10:34-35; 2 Chron 19:1-7; Jer. 9:23-25; Ezek. 18:21-29; Rom. 2:6-13; Col 3:23-25)
- the elimination of wickedness. (1 Thess 3:8-13)

If the church is to move ahead powerfully and be all that God wants it to be then it has to deal with its own internal sin. Church growth, from the spiritual standpoint, which is the major standpoint God has any concern about (3 John 2) , is in direct proportion to how well we deal with the failures in our midst.

There are four categories of people or attitudes. Three of these attitudes retard the growth and the power of the church.

1. The **unruly** or disorderly:

They're never in step. They're always out of synch or out of line. They're never with the program. When everybody else is moving ahead, they're going backwards. When everybody else is filling up the ranks in proper order, they're outside somewhere failing to do their duty, not particularly interested in serving, sometimes not at all interested in giving, idle, perhaps even loafing. They're in the way of the progress. Apathetic, they might be, sometimes contentious, sometimes rebellious, and in reality completing the spectrum all the way from apathy to rebellion.

2. The **feebleminded** has two sub groups; the worried and the wearisome.

The worried group is basically motivated by fear. These are the people in the church who have no courage, who will articulate the famous words "We've never done it that way before," who can give you ten reasons why you can't do anything you propose to do. They fear the unknown. They worry about everything. All the issues of life are far more than they can bear.

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They're usually sad, always worried, sometimes in despair, often depressed, discouraged and defeated.

The wearisome are the foot draggers. They're inline, but they're just going at the wrong speed. They never catch up. Teaching them, training them, disciplining them and you pour all of this energy into them, and every time you look around to see how close they might be, they look like they're farther away. Everything distracts them. They have a great difficulty concentrating, great difficulty focusing. They're just very exasperating because you make the maximum effort and you get the minimum return. They don't move and grow at the pace that would be considered normal.

3. The **weak**. If the weak do not get stronger in time they become the wicked. People who are spiritually and morally weak. Christians who, because of their weak faith, and weak disciplines of their life, are susceptible to sin, and they fall into the same sins over and over, and you barely get them up and dust them off and they're back in the same hole again. They find it very hard to do God's Will consistently. They embarrass themselves. They embarrass the church. They embarrass the Lord. They take an awful lot of attention. They test how good a church is at church discipline and usually run you all the way to at least step two.

The wicked are Christians who do evil. They commit sins against other saints right in the church. They break up marriages. They defile daughters. They steal. They gossip. They slander. They falsely accuse.

4. The **strong**. These are such in relationship to the weak. Based on four principles:
Romans 14:1-12 First principle, "Receive one another with understanding." You that are strong and understand your liberty, be sensitive and receive with open arms those that are weak and do not fully understand their liberty in Christ.
Romans 14:13-23 Second principle is to "build up one another without offending."
Romans 15:1-7 Third principle is to "please one another with Christ as your example."
Romans 15:8-13 Fourth principle is to rejoice with one another in God's plan.

"We should not judge people by their peak of excellence; but by the distance they have traveled from the point where they started"¹

The local church moves by what it has been mandated to do. The local church kills its Goliaths by doing what it's used to doing, by what it is taught and trained and developed to do. You cannot fight Goliath with Saul's armor. (1 Sam. 17:38-39)

1 Thess 2:10 someone must be the correct model.

1 Thess 2: 8, 11 someone must be able to impart good things "as a father doth his children."

¹ Quotes are by Henry Ward Beecher