

Vital Signs
of a healthy congregation.

When a person has a doctor's appointment or has to stay overnight in a hospital there are those who will take their vitals (*temperature, blood pressure, pulse*) just to make sure they are healthy and not in any danger of sudden illness or even death. So it is with the church. The following are some "vital signs" that can tell if there needs to be concern over a church's health. (*Since they are all vital, these are not in order of importance.*)

Is the local congregation:
Benevolent

Rom 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

- Sometimes there are needs within the local congregation as well as in those that are in other states or other nations. It is up to the local church leaders to decide how to handle God's money. With that said, God will bless us when we give to help other congregations of the Lord's church that are in need even when it might "break the bank" to do so. Sometimes these needs include support for a mission work or schooling of those who wish to go to preaching school. Sometimes money is needed in areas that are hit by tornados or flooding. When other congregations suffer, we should all aid to reduce their suffering. (*Some of the following scriptures are from more modern versions and this is not to say I totally support them because some are lacking. I just use them for clarity.*)

2Co 8:1 Brothers and sisters, we want you to know how God showed His kindness to the churches in the province of Macedonia. **2** While they were being severely tested by suffering, their overflowing joy, along with their extreme poverty, has made them even more generous. **3** I assure you that by their own free will they have given all they could, even more than they could afford. **4** They made an appeal to us, begging us to let them participate in the ministry of God's kindness to His holy people in Jerusalem. **5** They did more than we had expected. First, they gave themselves to the Lord and to us, since this was God's will. *God's Word*

2Co 9:7 Each of you must make up your own mind about how much to give. But don't feel sorry that you must give and don't feel that you are forced to give. God loves people who love to give. *Contemporary English Version*

Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. **10** As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Is the local congregation:
Loving

Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. **44** But I say unto you, Love (*Gk.25- αγαπαω- much; to love [in a social or moral sense]*) your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Mat 22:35 Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, tempting Him, and saying, **36** Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? **37** Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy

mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

- Jesus was stating here that everything they (*the Jews*) were taught from little up, in reality, focused on loving God first and our fellow man as if he was us.

Eph 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

1Th 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you: 13 **To the end** (*consequence*) He may stablish your hearts (*Gk.2588- [mind]*) unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

- The purpose to grow in love is so that when we stand before God in the resurrection our consciences will be clear (*1 Pet 3:21*).

1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned (*Gk.505- sincere*) love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently (*Gk.1619- intently*) [*Thus showing how we are to focus our love toward each other*]: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of **incorruptible**, by **the word of God**, which liveth and abideth forever.

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it (*her*); 26 That He might sanctify and cleanse it (*her*) with the **washing of water by** (*Gk.1722- through*) **the word**, 27 That He might present it (*her*) to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it (*she*) should be holy and without blemish.

- With these passages in mind then, being born again is in the obedient act of immersion in water (*baptism*) according to the Holy Spirit's teaching on the subject.

Is the local congregation:
Evangelistic

Mat 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power** (*Gk.1848- delegated influence: right*) is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. 19 **Go** ye therefore, and **teach** all nations, **baptizing** them in the name (*Gk.3686- authority*) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 **Teaching** them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in **Whom they have not believed?** and how shall they believe in Him **of Whom they have not heard?** and **how shall they hear without a preacher?** 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

1Co 9:16 If I spread the Good News, I have nothing to brag about because I **have an obligation** to do this. How horrible it will be for me if I don't spread the Good News!
God's Word

1Th 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: **7** So that **ye were ensamples** to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** For **from you sounded out the word of the Lord** not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also **in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad**; so that we need not to speak any thing. **9** For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you (*"Everyone is talking about how you welcomed us"* - *CEV*), and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; **10** And to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1Th 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk (*do as we taught you*) and to please God, *so* ye would abound (*Gk.4052- to superabound [in quantity or quality], be in excess: -[be more] abundant, increase*) more and more.

- The only way a congregation grows in number is to evangelize!

2Ti 4:1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; **2** **Preach the word**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. **3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4** And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. **5** But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, **do the work of an evangelist**, make full proof of thy ministry.

 Is the local congregation:
Sensitive

2Co 2:1 I have decided not to make my next visit with you so painful. **2** If I make you feel bad, who would be left to cheer me up, except the people I had made to feel bad? **3** The reason I want to be happy is to make you happy. I wrote as I did because I didn't want to visit you and be made to feel bad, when you should make me feel happy. **4** At the time I wrote, I was suffering terribly. My eyes were full of tears, and my heart was broken. But I didn't want to make you feel bad. I only wanted to let you know how much I cared for you. **5** I don't want to be hard on you. But if one of you has made someone feel bad, I am not really the one who has been made to feel bad. Some of you are the ones. **6** Most of you have already pointed out the wrong that person did, and that is punishment enough for what was done. **7** When people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won't give up in despair. **8** You should make them sure of your love for them. *-Contemporary English Version*

Php 4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful (*Gk.5426- to exercise the mind, that is, entertain or have sentiment or opinion*), but ye lacked opportunity. **11** Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. **12** I know both how to be abased (*Gk.5013- depressed, humiliated*), and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **13**

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. **14** Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with (*Gk.4790- to share in company with, that is, co-participate in*) my affliction (*Gk.2347- burden*). **15** Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated (*Gk.2841- to share with others*) with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. **16** For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity (*Gk.5532- employment: - need*). **17** Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

- What Paul seems to be saying here is that the only congregation that supported his work by seeing to his needs at this time was the church at **Philippi**. They were sensitive to his needs and made provision for him even at times when they may have been struggling themselves.

Is the local congregation:
Scriptural

Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship *Him* in spirit and in **truth**.

Joh 12:46 I am come a light (*knowledge*) into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness (*ignorance*). **47** And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world (*this time*), but to save the world. **48** He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day**. **49** For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. **50** And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.

- Wouldn't we want to have knowledge of what will ultimately determine our eternal destinies?

1Th 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received **it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God**, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

- How does the church look at the Bible? Is it held in such high regard that it alone is where we go for answers concerning spiritual questions? Do we do everything "by the book"?

2Ti 2:15 Study (*Gk.4704- make an effort: -be diligent*) to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner** of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (*discerns right and wrong*)

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit (*Gk.4151- vital principle*), but try (*Gk.1381- test*) the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Is the local congregation:
Excited

2Co 9:1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous (*Gk.4053- excessive*) for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness (*Gk.4288- readiness*) of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and **your zeal** (*Gk.2205- heat, that is, [figuratively] "zeal": -fervent mind*) **hath provoked very many.**

- In order for any congregation to survive for the long haul, even for the short run, there has to be an excitement concerning her salvation. When a **Christian** is excited, whether newly born or having been in the church for some time, others will notice. Whether their response is negative or positive, they still notice.

Rev 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art **neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.** 16 So then because thou art **lukewarm**, and neither cold nor hot, I will **spew thee out** of My mouth.

- Hot water has a positive, useful function as does cold water. The one can be used to make a hot drink on a cold day and the other quite the opposite. ("I **would rather thou wert cold or hot**".) So when a congregation has her temperature taken it better be either cold or hot and not lukewarm, which would make the **Savior** gag. A lukewarm church is only going through the motions.

Is the local congregation:
Devoted

Act 20:31 Therefore watch (*Gk.1127- to keep awake: -be vigilant*), and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

- Is the local congregation as devoted as **Paul** was or as **Jesus** was in coming into the world for the purpose of dying for the sins of others? Whether that devotion is toward each other's needs, **Bible** study, benevolence, visiting those who are homebound or just making calls or sending cards, whatever we are devoted to with reference to our walk with the **Lord** while on this earth, it **will** make a difference in edifying a fellow saint and keeping the "vital signs" of the local congregation healthy.

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: 6 In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, **I come** (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) **to do Thy will, O God.** ...10 **By the which will** we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

So, if we, as the local congregation (*or even as individual Christians*), are:

Benevolent, Loving, Evangelistic, Sensitive, Scriptural, Excited and Devoted we are BLESSED!

If you are not blessed to be part of the **Lord's** church, you can be.

Hear: **Romans 10:17** ... "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of **God.**"

Believe: **Heb 11:6** ... "for he that commeth to **God** must believe that **He** is" ...

Repent: **Lk 13:3** ... "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Confess: **Mat 10:32** "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before

My Father which is in Heaven."

Be baptized: Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Remain faithful: Rom 6:4 ..."even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Charli Yana
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