

# “What’s Underneath Our Steeple?”

Rev. 3:1-3

The purposes of a local New Testament Church should be this: We exist for the purpose of glorifying God. We want to “display” Christ in our life. We desire to win lost souls to Christ. We desire to be a help and encouragement to each other. In our text, Jesus had taken inventory (our a Pulse) of the church in Sardis. And He makes a defining statement at the end of V.1. He says, “*I know what you do...I know thy works / I know what your reputation is in this city as an “alive” church... I know that you are dead...*” I don’t know specifically what caused the death of the Sardis church, but here are some potential killers of a vibrant church...

## I. **Worship Of The Past.** Make a distinction...

- A. **VIP: Learning from the past vs. Living in the past.** Learning from the past is healthy and can lead to healthy change. Churches need to understand where they’ve been. Living in the past = is insignificant to new people.

## II. **Greater Concern With Cosmetics Than Growth.**

- A. **They should display the heart and attitude of the people.**
- B. **They should be treated with dignity and respect.**
- C. **The buildings are a location to reach people!**

## III. **Love Of Tradition Over The Love Of Christ. (*Traditions vs. Traditionalism*)**

- A. **Change Is A Fact Of Life** – no one understands THAT better than those of us who have worked with youth. Periodically, a church must identify a “dead horse” in its program.
  - 1. Two things about a dead horse – they don’t get you anywhere and they tend to stink up the place. What do you do with a dead horse? They need to be buried. (Illust.) Serving as a Counselor a Camp Joy – I went there as a boy too. The highlight of Friday night was to go on a midnight ride to the horse’s graveyard on top of the hill in the woods. We were told that they go there when they were ready to die. They follow the same trail...when they were getting ready to die... THE HORSES HAD DEVELOPED SOME THINGS... THEY DEVELOPED A...
    - a. Lack of interest in a man-made idea – giving kids a ride
    - b. Lack of attendance in a man-made idea – stay in the barn at riding time, lay down in the stalls
    - c. Lack of power to go any further – just enough “get up and go” to get up the hill and.... die!
  - 2. At times, we need to take inventory of our church programs... PEOPLE HANGING ON TO TRADITIONALISM DEVELOP SOME THINGS, TOO...
    - a. Is there a lack of interest? In our programs - our methods of living out our purposes as a church.
    - b. Is there a lack of attendance? In our programs – our methods...
    - c. Is there a lack of power? Are we just propping up a program... because it’s the way we’ve done it in the past? The excitement’s gone but we still try to keep it going...
- B. **Fear Of Change – will stunt the growth of a church... or kill it.** 3 THINGS YOU’LL FIND IN A “GROWTH-STUNTED” CHURCH...
  - 1. A Fresh-Idea – delivered, then shot down. A fresh idea doesn’t mean change in the doctrine of the church. Someone said, “*Methods are many, principles are few; methods may change put principles never do.*”
  - 2. A Frustration – develops when we do the same thing over and over, expecting different results!
    - a. Some churches want excitement in their worship service, but they don’t want new music. The book of Psalms is our Bible – Hymnbook. Seven times the word “NEW” is used in Psalms... always connected with “worship” and a new song!
      - 1.) **Ps 33:3** “Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.”
      - 2.) **Ps 40:3** “And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

- 3.) **Ps 81:1-3** “Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.”
  - 4.) **Ps 96:1** “O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.”
  - 5.) **Ps 98:1** “O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.”
  - 6.) **Ps 144:9** “I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.”
  - 7.) **Ps 149:1** “Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.”
3. **A Finality** – sets in, over a ministry when the group will not follow the leader.
- a. If a church isn’t strongly led by its Pastor, then it’s only a matter of time until the crickets sound louder than the true worship.
  - b. If church members become self-centered, it will cripple and even reverse individual and Church-wide growth. ***Steps to Recovery...***

- I. WAKE UP!** He said, “Open your eyes and take inventory. Take a critical look at the condition you are in and change directions!”
- A. V.2** “*...Be watchful...*” GK: Be constantly alert! When a church is alive, you have: Growth, Repair, Reproduction, and Power! If these elements are not existent, then a church is either dying or is dead!
  - B. V.3** “*...Repent.*” When is the last time that you did this in your own personal life. You prayed, “*Lord, leave no stone unturned and shine Your piercing light of holiness in my life and reveal any harbored sin!*”

- II. Strengthen the Things (or people) that are Right With God!** V.2 “*...strengthen the things which remain...*” He says, “Hey, you that are still alive – shake some life into your dying brothers and sisters” This church had gotten “laid back,” not because of persecution or buying into heresy = they were content with Mediocrity and Former Glory!

- III. Remember Your Purpose** V.3 “*...remember therefore how thou hast received and heard.*” They had accepted Christ by faith, been forgiven of sin, and had been empowered to live a victorious Christian life. But they had forgotten their purpose as a church!
- A. Ephesians 2:10** “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
  - B. Titus 2:14** “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

- IV. Guard and Apply The Truth** V.3 “*...and hold fast...*” Hold fast = “To guard, to Watch, to keep an eye on”